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And other Sermons

BY

REV. RICHARD ROBERTS

London
CHARLES H. KELLY
2, CASTLE ST., CITY RD., AND 26, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
1903

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THE REDEEMER'S JEWELS

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.—MALACHI iii. 17.

LITTLE or nothing is known historically of the prophet Malachi. The time, the place, the circumstances of his birth are all unknown. We know nothing of his ancestors and nothing of his descendants if he had any. Like a meteor he starts up suddenly in the horizon of the church, and after running a brief career of exceeding brightness, he disappears as suddenly, leaving no trace behind except the few pages of thrilling prophecy with which the Old Testament closes. His name signifies the messenger of Jehovah. He fulfilled the functions of his prophetic office immediately after the return of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon, about 400 years before the birth of Christ, in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. If the Book of Malachi is the last prophetic book in the Old Testament, the Book of Nehemiah is the last historical book; it would be an advantage to read these two

books together, for they refer to the same period in the history of Israel. It was a period of fearful religious degeneracy. The long captivity of seventy years in a land full of idols, of a base degrading heathenism, far away from the temple with its sacred ordinances, had exerted a most baneful influence on Israel and loosened the bonds which bound the nation to Jehovah. The abominations so sternly denounced by Nehemiah in his book are precisely the same as those denounced by Malachi in his book. Nehemiah as civil governor employs the rod of authority and punishes the evil-doers, while Malachi as a prophet warns, admonishes and threatens in the name of Jehovah. The catalogue of the prevailing evils is dark and dismal. Both priests and people are involved in the common guilt. The *priests* performed their duties perfunctorily, in a cold, formal, heartless manner. Even while discharging the functions of their sacred office, God heard them murmuringly say—"the service of God is a weariness." They polluted the altar of the Lord by offering the lame, the blind, the sick instead of the healthy and sound; they sacrificed the ewes because less costly instead of the males of the flock; they offered that which was corrupt, stale, polluted bread. Jehovah was thus insulted throughout the holy service by the presentation of the imperfect and inferior instead of the best as God demanded and the ritual prescribed.

The *people* also were equally corrupt. They married heathen women, allied themselves to idolaters. These alliances alienated the people from Jehovah and his worship; the children of these alliances were not taught the sacred language of their fathers or were allowed to forget it. They divorced themselves from their Jewish wives without a cause in order to be married to heathen women. In bold, strong, figurative language Malachi describes the altar of God covered over with the cries and tears and sighs of these injured women, and these cry aloud to heaven for vengeance, so that when the priests place their sacrifices upon that altar to cry for mercy, God does not hear the cry of the sacrifices for mercy because the cries and tears of the injured women for vengeance are louder. "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand" (ii. 13). In addition to all this, the people withheld the tithes, the portion of their substance which God demanded for the maintenance of the temple and its sacred services, so that the priests instead of devoting themselves exclusively to temple service had to cultivate the soil and work daily to secure for themselves a livelihood. The Sabbaths of Jehovah they polluted. They bought and sold, transacted business on the

holy day and shamefully neglected temple duties. Thus, by multiplied sins both priests and people provoked the anger of Jehovah.

But not all of the captives who returned from Babylon had corrupted themselves; there were some noble exceptions; a remnant was preserved, a few remained faithful to their covenant with Jehovah. To this faithful remnant our text refers. "Then" —when corruption and indifference prevailed, when many of the Lord's people had gone in the way of the heathen and were alienated from Jehovah and his worship—"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

I. The JEWELS.
II. The COUNTING of them.
III. The EXHIBITION of them.
IV. The APPROPRIATION of them.

I. The JEWELS.

Where shall we find these jewelled treasures? Where shall we search for them? Not *above* in the garnished heaven of sparkling worlds; not *below* in the mines of hidden wealth of gold and silver where

men toil hard and long to gain what they deem precious; not where the topaz, the coral and the diamond sparkle; not in our national galleries thronged with rare products of nature and art; not in the museums with their vast collections of valuable antiquities; not in the wardrobes and chests where the rich and noble lock up their lustrous gems and jewels to be seen and worn only on high festivals. Not there must we look for Jehovah's precious treasures. We must look for them in souls that have put on Christ, men who have become partakers of the divine nature, who have been created anew after the image of his Son. These and these only are the persons whom he delights to honour with the title—"My jewels," "My special treasure."

God estimates men not by their physical structure, not by their mental qualities, not by their learning or wealth, but by their harmony or disharmony with His Will, by their sympathy or want of sympathy with his character and authority, by their dominant thoughts and feelings concerning Himself. You tell me what a man feels, thinks and does in relation to God and I will tell you what God's estimate is of that man. In verse 16 we have a full description of the small remnant of faithful ones whom God designates, "~~my jewels~~" His peculiar treasure.

"They feared the Lord" — not that guilty tormenting fear which drives man away from God, that shudders with remorse in his presence, that trembles beneath his frown, that seeks, like Adam guilty, a hiding-place where God is not; but that holy fear which reverently approaches God, that devoutly yearns for his fellowship, and yet is awed by a sense of his nearness, that fear which covets his favour, and whose highest heaven is to live in the light of his approval, that fear which remembers his covenant and submits to his kingly Authority.

"They thought upon his Name." Twice He had revealed that Name to their fathers; once to Moses as the "I Am" and once to Abraham as "I am God All-sufficient." To Moses He proclaimed *what He is in himself*, the "I Am," the Self-contained, the Self-Existent, the Absolute, the Source of life and being. To Abraham He proclaimed *what He is to his people* "God All-sufficient." The All-satisfying portion, the All in All. This Great Name was ever in the thought of the faithful remnant; they pondered over it as revealed to their fathers; they gloried in its infinite superiority to the gods of the heathen from whose bondage Jehovah had delivered them; they remembered what that Name had done for them and for their fathers before them and were *thankful*; they thought of the infinite resources of that All-sufficient Name and were *trustful*.

"They spake often one to another." They not only thought about God in solitude and silence, but they cheered and strengthened one another in evil times by rehearsing together the wonderful things which God had done for them and for their fathers. It was no empty idle talk; it was so good that Jehovah hearkened and heard; so precious was it that God bent his ear, put himself in a listening attitude to hear every word they said. God not only heard the talk but it was so pleasing to Him that he wrote it in a book, which he calls "the book of remembrance," kept before him for them that fear the Lord. These are the men whom God calls "my jewels," "my special treasure."

II. The COUNTING up of his jewels.

The text implies that a period is coming when the Lord of Hosts will make up or count up his jewels. At the winding up of the economy of redemption when the Son shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, the Redeemer will gather together all his saved ones, of all ages, from all countries, home and foreign, continents and islands in order to present them to the Father as the fruit of his Passion. But why number them?

1. *That the Redeemer may have the satisfaction of knowing how many.* Of all the works of God the great redemption by Christ is the greatest and

costliest. We know no other work of God that cost him anything. Creating cost him nothing, neither effort nor sacrifice. He had only to speak and the innumerable worlds started forth at his bidding. A word was sufficient. He spake and it was done; he commanded and it stands fast for ever. Sustaining what he created requires neither effort nor sacrifice. He upholds all things by the word of his power. But He cannot redeem a lost race by a word of command or a fiat of his will. To redeem will cost him an effort, a sacrifice, even the greatest sacrifice that God can make. He must give his Other Self, his Only Begotten, co-equal, co-eternal Son. By giving Him a sacrifice to save the lost He gives so much that he has no more that he can give. Does it not seem natural and reasonable that Jesus Christ at the last, after all the humiliation of Bethlehem, the agony of Gethsemane and the shameful death of the cross, should want to know how many have accepted the provision of his redeeming love, how far the costly scheme has succeeded, what is the extent of his victory, the full harvest of his toil and agony, and whether the final results are in any degree commensurate with the cost of the undertaking?

On earth, under the pressure of an infinite sorrow, he was sustained and cheered by a glimpse of his future reward. For the joy set before him he

endured the cross despising the shame. What was that joy which upheld him under his agony? It was the joy of seeing heaven peopled with redeemed myriads, the joy of hearing the song of redemption bursting forth from countless hosts of saved ones—"Unto him that loved us," etc. When this joy is fulfilled his heart of love will be filled with infinite satisfaction, for in this great gathering of sanctified ones he will see the travail of his soul. He shall see his seed, a holy multitude which no man can number, and as he surveys them he will rejoice in them as witnesses that he has not laboured in vain, that he has not spent his strength or laid down his life for nought. If on earth he went forth weeping bearing precious seed he shall doubtless come the second time rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him, and present them "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

2. He will count his jewels *that the intelligent universe may know how many*, that Jesus Christ may give to hell as well as heaven, to demons as well as holy angels, to the lost as well as to the saved, evidence that redemption has not been a failure, but a complete success, a splendid triumph.

When He makes up his jewels it will be found that there are more men in heaven than in hell. Jesus will have the majority. All who die in infancy and childhood whether in Christian or heathen

lands will give him the majority to begin with. In addition to these there will be the innumerable multitude who have believed on him in ages past, and the innumerable multitude who will believe on him throughout the ages to come. It would scarcely be a triumph worthy of the Redeemer if at the final division of the human family Satan carried the majority with him into the world of woe, while the Conqueror of Bozrah led only a minority into the realms of bliss. The minority would scarcely satisfy the great heart of him who endured the Gethsemane agony and the shameful death of the cross. When he sees of the travail of his soul he will be satisfied and if we are among the saved we shall share his satisfaction. It will be a triumph worthy of being celebrated in the presence of a witnessing universe good and evil. On his head the crowns will be piled star high while the anthem reverberates throughout all worlds, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

3. That Jesus Christ may be assured that all the faithful are there and that not one is wanting. Oriental monarchs kept a book of chronicles in which was inserted the name of every person who had rendered faithful and distinguished service to the king, the government or the country, and con-

nected with each name a detailed record of the service rendered. Mordecai one of the despised Jewish captives occupying a subordinate position in the king's household discovered among the superior officers of the palace a secret plot to assassinate king Ahasuerus. He made known the plot to the authorities and so saved the king's life. When the intelligence was conveyed to the king, it is said "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles and they were read before the king. And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him" (Esther vi. 1–3). You know the sequel. Mordecai was arrayed in the royal purple, the crown royal placed upon his head, and riding on the king's favourite steed was marched through the streets of the city, with attendants going before proclaiming "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour." The King whom the saints serve has his book of chronicles where the name of every faithful one and all his noble deeds are minutely recorded. We find frequent allusions to this book of records in the

Scriptures. "Thou tellest my wanderings, put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?" (Ps. lvi. 8). Every tear you shed for Christ and his great cause finds a record in his book of remembrance. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his Name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb. vi. 10). God gives you authority to charge him with unrighteousness if he forget any service of love however humble which you have rendered in his Great Name. To the faithful in the poor church in Sardis our Lord declares, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels" (Rev. iii. 5). "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke x. 20). Covet not the power to work miracles, to cast out devils, to tread on serpents and scorpions and remain unhurt and unharmed. A far greater honour is yours, a distinction infinitely more worthy of your ambition —you may have your names written in the book of the chronicles of the King of heaven. When the Lord of Hosts makes up his jewels there will be something analogous to the calling of the roll. In that day the book of the chronicles will be opened, every name in it read out and the Redeemer will

not be satisfied until every one has answered to the call. He must be assured, he must give assembled worlds the assurance, that not one of the faithful is absent and that the covenant of redemption has been fulfilled to the uttermost.

Jesus Christ has covenanted with the Father that he will keep all those committed to him. There must be no ground for the Father in that day to charge the Son with unfaithfulness, with having lost one through inability or neglect. Jesus Christ has also covenanted with us that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have eternal life. There must be no room in that day for a single soul to say I believed in his Name and yet he has not saved me. I fulfilled the conditions of salvation and yet he leaves me outside the circle of the saved to perish for ever. This *must* never be, this *can* never be. He will call the roll, each by name, he will count them up one by one, and in delivering them up to the Father, will say, Of all thou hast given me I have lost none.

III. The EXHIBITION OF HIS JEWELS.

Having called the roll and ascertained that all the faithful ones are there, he will exhibit them, hold them up as his most magnificent trophies, his greatest, noblest work.

Great things doeth He which we cannot compre-

hend. Creating was great; building, beautifying, vitalising the universe—great: peopling space with innumerable worlds of inconceivable vastness—great: storing earth with mineral and vegetable for the service of man its chief inhabitant—great: stocking the air with birds and winged insects, the ocean with fish and the earth with animals both wild and tame—great: filling heaven with principalities, powers, thrones and dominions — great. In the presence of these wonderful displays of power we exclaim, How manifold are thy works, O Lord, in wisdom hast Thou made them all. Greater than any, yes, infinitely greater than all in beauty and magnificence, in grandeur and glory, will be the congregation of holy ones gathered from among sinful men and made so pure as if they had never known sin.

Some of us are old enough to remember the first Great Exhibition of the Industries of all Nations in 1851. On first entering that "Palace of all Nations," how impressive, how magnificent, how overwhelming the scene! We have had similar exhibitions since in Paris, Chicago and elsewhere. Jesus Christ is going to have the greatest exhibition the universe has ever known. Throughout the centuries he has been preparing for it. In China, India and Japan, on the continents of Europe, Africa, America and Australia, in the Islands of the sea, in

Northern latitudes among the Esquimaux and Laplanders, God's agents are building up characters and beautifying souls for the great exhibit. All nations will be represented in that vast gathering. It is spoken of in the Bible as the period of "the manifestation" or the revelation "of the sons of God" when the Redeemer will come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe.

On the Cross He made a public exhibition of the *enemies* he conquered. "Having spoiled principalities and powers he made a show of them openly." Like the Roman Conqueror with the spoils of battle Jesus Christ linked the principalities and powers of evil to his conquering chariot, and as he ascended to heaven he made a show of them openly. Passing upward on his heavenward way he held them up in the presence of a witnessing universe and summoned the worlds in space to behold the completeness of his triumph. But when He comes on his throne of judgment He will exhibit his *friends*, make a show of them openly, that the intelligent universe may behold and admire his workmanship in the innumerable multitude he has saved and sanctified, the jewels he has burnished and made to flash with the beauty of God.

Ezra who prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and the few faithful ones that

trembled at the words of the God of Israel when read by Ezra, will be there. Nehemiah, the noble heroic builder of the walls of Jerusalem, and the devoted people who "had a mind to work" with him will be there (Ezra ix. 4; Neh. x. 28, 29). The myriads who have died in infancy and childhood will be there; and of them Christ will say, These are they that sinned not after the similitude of Adam's transgression. They were born depraved and lost, but I redeemed them, purified them, ennobled them. They entered the eternal state as infants knowing nothing, but under my fostering care they have grown in wisdom, blessedness and glory and developed into perfect men. There also are the children of sorrow and afflictions on whom God has employed the chisel the hammer and the file to beautify and glorify them. Millions more of all climates and countries of all nations and ages will be there. Their names may not be registered in the chronicles of earth, or carved in enduring marble, but they are written in the chronicles of the King of Saints, and he will publish them in high places in the hearing of the principalities and powers in that day when he makes up his jewels.

When king Hezekiah received the royal deputation from Babylon, in the pride of his heart he showed them all the precious treasures of his house of silver and gold, etc. (Isa. xxxix. 2). Angered by this

exhibition of vanity the Lord sent the prophet Isaiah with a message of stern reproof to warn the king that all these valued treasures of which he was so proud would be taken away by the king of Babylon and carried as spoils of war into the enemy's country. When Jesus Christ exhibits his jewels, his redeemed ones, there will be no prophet to warn him that he shall be deprived of them, that they shall be carried away as spoils or brought again into captivity. The Redeemer will say, "They are mine for ever, no man, no demon shall ever pluck them out of my hand." We Arminians will have no need any more to preach the doctrine of the possibility of falling from grace. That doctrine will then be out of date. We shall all be Calvinists, and with a firm faith hold the doctrine of final perseverance.

IV. The APPROPRIATING of them. "They are mine."

Under Roman law when a man received into his family a stranger and adopted him as a *son* two ceremonies were necessary; the one domestic the other legal, the one private the other public. The ceremony of adoption was first observed in the family where the stranger was formally received and acknowledged as son in the presence of the entire household. But in order to make the new relation between the adopting father and the adopted son

legal, the ceremony must also be observed publicly in the presence of civil authorities and witnesses.

The saints here on earth are brought into the family of God, become members of the household of faith, receive the Spirit of adoption whereby they cry Abba, Father. This adoption is private; the knowledge of it is limited at first to God and the adopted believer. Afterwards it becomes known only to a limited circle of kindred spirits to whom the adopted may communicate the joyful fact. It is not an event that the world cares to hear or that awakens interest in any beyond the select few. It often remains a precious secret treasured up in the believing soul and enjoyed in the highest degree when in conscious fellowship with God the soul is able to look up and say, Abba, Father.

But our text points to a period when there will be a *public recognition* of them as the sons of God. "In that day." This will not take place in this life, not at death, and not on the entrance of each soul into the heavenly world, but at the general resurrection. Until then only a fragment of the saintly nature will be glorified. In the intermediate state the saints are only half men, a vestige of what they were and a vestige of what they are to be. Redemption hitherto has only touched the half of their humanity, the other half—the body of their humiliation is in bondage, in darkness, in unconsciousness, in the cor-

ruption of the sepulchre, but this humbled remnant is to be redeemed and delivered from the bondage of death and the grave into a conscious life of glory. 'The brethren of the Incarnate Son of God will not realise the fulness of their brotherhood till their bodies are raised and made like the body of his glory.' That great crisis is called by St. Paul the period of their "adoption." "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 23). Then, when the saints are complete, when both body and soul are redeemed reunited and glorified, the Father in the presence of a witnessing creation will proclaim their adoption into the family of God and the Son Himself will publicly own their brotherhood and not be ashamed to call them brethren. St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us that the saints of all ages and of all countries are to be perfected together. The Old Testament saints are not to be perfected without us or before us; the New Testament saints are not to be perfected before the saints of the Old Covenant, we are to be perfected together. Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Noah, Moses, etc., will not be made perfect without us. They must wait for us, and when our spirits have passed whither they are gone, we shall have to wait for those that come after, and all must wait together until the last convert has been won and the last straggler in the

race has reached the goal. Then the bodies of all from the first to the last will be raised together, glorified together, perfected together. *That* will be the great day of Christ for making up his jewels, counting their number, completing their perfection and publicly proclaiming their adoption. Separating them from the rest of the human race and gathering them together in one vast assembly of regenerated sanctified souls, in the most public manner possible Christ will throw over them the shadow of his holy arm and will say,—See how changed, how transfigured they all are, how old things have passed away and all things have become new, they owe it all to me and to my dying love, therefore they are all mine. To-day they are to be crowned kings for ever. Then looking upward, with authority He will say, Lift up your heads O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, that I may conduct the sacramental host of my redeemed into the presence of the King, and " present them faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy." Then ushering the innumerable multitude into the presence chamber of the King seated on his throne of sapphire, he will say, Behold here am I and the children Thou hast given me, and of all Thou hast given me I have lost none.

Brethren! Who of us will be among that honoured and happy throng? Will you? Will you?

Shall I? We all may be and yet it is awfully possible that we may *not all* be. Who among us are going to be the exceptions? One and all let us join heart and soul in the prayer,

> Oh that with yonder sacred throng
> We at his feet may fall,
> Join in the everlasting song,
> And crown him Lord of all.

RELIGIOUS DEPRESSION AND ITS REMEDY

O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.—PSALM xlii. 6.

THIS Psalm opens with a sigh rising from the depths of a saintly soul smitten by God and yearning for support and succour which the world with all its resources could not impart. That sigh is oft repeated throughout the Psalm; but with the sigh, faith and hope alternately speak out their word of cheer and so relieve the gloom and prevent it from settling into the night of dark despair.

Two thoughts are suggested by our text.

I. The Sigh of Religious Depression.

II. The Remedy adopted.

I. THE SIGH OF RELIGIOUS DEPRESSION.

David is supposed to be the speaker in this Psalm. It is he who utters the lamentation "My soul is cast down within me," which means, My soul is dissolved, subdued, broken, bowed down, bending

under the intolerable weight of my grief. What has caused this depression?

1. *The faithlessness of friends and kindred.* At this time David was the victim of a cruel conspiracy. His son Absalom headed that conspiracy. Many of the people sided with the rebellious son, so that the royal father had to seek safety in flight. David and the few men that sided with him hurried along the plains of Jordan and came to Bahurim; there Shimei the son of Gera met them, cast stones at David and his men, and cursed him,—"Come out, Come out thou bloody man and thou man of Belial." The fugitive king tarried not to reply to this abuse, nor would he allow his men to smite Shimei with vengeance. Yet, these reproaches sunk deep into his heart, they pierced him as a sword, and even when he arrived in the land of the Hermons, the curses of the son of Gera were still ringing in his ears, and in the bitterness of his anguish he exclaimed,—O my God, my soul is cast down within me.

Reproaches still more bitter than Shimei's would pursue the royal fugitive to his hiding-place. Conscience would not fail to reproach him that the heartless rebellion of Absalom was only the natural result of the father's unfaithfulness in earlier years. The remembrance of his over-indulgent treatment of Absalom, of the lack of wholesome discipline in the home, would pierce him through with many a

sorrow. Bitter as it may be to feel the want of respect, of reverence, of obedience, of love from the children that are dear to us, that bitterness is intensified when memory testifies that we ourselves caused the evil by our unwisdom, neglect or excess of tenderness. If David was now pursued with such painful memories we are not surprised to hear the sad cry,—O my God, my soul is cast down within me.

When sorrow invades our home, when trouble sits with furrowed brow at our fireside, when disappointment shadows our dwelling-place, when friends and kindred fail us, when children whom we expected to be olive branches or vine clusters in our households, turn out to be briars and thorns, so that where we expected a fountain of gladness we find only a Marah of bitterness, no words can better express our feelings than David's lamentation, O my God, my soul is cast down within me.

2. Another cause of the depression was the *Sneer* of his enemies.

David was everywhere recognised as a devout worshipper of Jehovah. He professed to have been called from being a shepherd boy to the throne of Israel, and anointed of God for the kingly office, and yet, now he is dethroned, hunted like a partridge on the mountains, pursued by his enemies who scoffingly howl at him the sneer,—Where now is

thy God? In strong figurative language he describes the assault,—As with a sword in my bones, or As a crushing in my bones do mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? They stab me to the heart with their taunts and seem to say,—"In lofty psalms and songs thou hast often proclaimed the power, the loving kindness, the faithfulness of thy God; but Where is He to-day? Why does He withhold succour and help from one who has trusted him so long, and whose praise of him has been so loud and so sweet? Is not the plight in which he has left thee a proof that the God whom thou hast served is impotent or indifferent, either that he cannot or that he cares not to help thee?" In verse 3 he employs another strong figure to express the intensity of his anguish. My tears have been my meat (my bread) day and night while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? The sorrows of his heart well up within him and express themselves in copious tears. His tears become in a manner his food; he drinks and eats more tears than bread. Many of God's saints have had inward sorrows one of whose signs is inability to eat their necessary food. One child of sorrow exclaims,—"My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread." In the moment of her grief it is said of Hannah that "She wept and ate not." Under

the pressure of great calamities Job cried, "For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters." When the enemies laughed scornfully over the disasters which had befallen Israel, the inspired historian describes the event thus:—"Thou feedest them with the bread of tears, and givest them tears to drink in great measure."

Weeping is nature's outlet for sorrow. The soul weighted with grief finds blessed relief in tears, but when unable to weep, the heart sometimes collapses and the issue is death, we then speak of the victim as having died of a broken heart. There are moments when we feel our sorrows too great for tears and when we would give much for power to weep. It is a benevolent provision to relieve the burdened soul. I am thankful that I can weep without sinning, for Jesus wept and yet sinned not. Christ sanctioned tears in the family of Bethany by weeping himself.

To many sensitive natures the cold sneer is the most painful form of persecution. Better be smitten with the hand than with the mocking sneer of contempt. It is no small trial for a good man, conscious of integrity to be in darkness and to have no sympathy; to be a fugitive in banishment and to have nothing but sneers poured upon him. If when in darkness with my right hand groping after

God striving to touch Him—if then, my human friends let go my left hand, leaving me without help either from above or from beneath, this would be desolation, agony.

When misfortunes befell Job there were not wanting some who misunderstood him, and misinterpreted God's ways and argued that the misfortunes were manifest punishments for Job's sins hidden it may be from men but known to God. When the viper fastened on Paul's hand in Melita, the barbarians argued that it was conclusive of Paul's guilt, that he was not so good as he professed to be, that he must be a hypocrite if not a murderer, and that the gods were avenging the wrong by killing him with the venomous bite of a reptile. Even the Divine Master endured this contradiction of sinners against Himself. When in his deepest agony He cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" instantly he was taunted with the sneer, Hark! he calleth for Elias. Let him alone. Let us see whether Elias will come and save him. They knew well that he was not crying for Elias. It was the cry of agony, and in the darkest hour of his life. Theirs was a wilful, cruel misinterpretation, a sneer which like cold steel went deeper into his heart than the spear thrust into his side.

3. The chief cause of his depression was *the hiding of God's face*, banishment from the sanctuary

and its sacred services. To the devout Israelite it was a calamity to be banished from his country. Its soil was sacred because comprehended in the covenant made with Abraham and the oath sworn to Isaac. There the patriarchs had wandered; there the ashes of the noble worthies of former ages reposed; there memorable victories had been achieved, miracles wrought, divine manifestations enjoyed. David was now driven out of the land on the other side of the Jordan, which bounded the land of promise. True he was not far, he had only to look across the river and he could see the land in all its beauty and magnificence. But a true Israelite on the other side of Jordan would feel himself banished from God, as if he had ceased to be the object of Jehovah's special care and loving-kindness. God would seem absent and distant. David seemed to share the Jewish notion. Absent from the land signified distant from God. No wonder that he gave utterance to his grief in the forceful and highly poetic strains, 'Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.' Imagine yourself on the beach watching the storm-tossed vessel; the great sea rolls on with all its waves to overwhelm the frail bark, the billows lift themselves up, the breakers shout, each wave calls upon its successor to come, and all cry to the overhanging clouds to come and unite

their floods to overwhelm the labouring ship. This was David's condition, his son had conspired against him, his subjects had revolted, his enemies reviled him, and to crown his misery God had hid his face from him.

Look at him in his mountain retreat. What are the uppermost thoughts in his mind? Does he think of his departed splendour, of his lost power, of his fallen crown? This would have been natural, and no one could have blamed him for it. Why then were not his thoughts occupied with the glory and power cruelly wrenched from him by wicked conspirators? Simply because David was a saint as well as a monarch. He thought more of his banishment from God's house than from his throne; more of his exclusion from the fellowship of saints than from the company of princes and nobles. His deepest cry was, When shall I come and appear before God? or When shall I come and see the face of God? the usual phrase for admission into the presence of a superior—"see the face of the king." This was the regular formula for the stated visits to the temple at the three great Jewish festivals. His intense yearning for this is expressed in language full of pathos and beauty, Ps. xliii. 3, 4, "O send out," etc.

When in his seclusion in the glens of Hermon, with the rushing torrent at his feet, David lifts his

eye, and sees on the other side of the stream a hart bounding, leaping from rock to rock, pursued by the huntsman; or wounded by the archers, panting, heaving and rushing to the stream to slake its fevered thirst. Ah! that poor creature is an exact picture of myself, and then seizing his harp he makes the rocks echo to the strain,—"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God."

The chief glory of our sanctuary services is not in the men who take the lead in conducting them, but in the fact that God is there. We are in danger of being content with the ordinances when we have gifted men and brilliant talents to conduct them whether God be manifestly present or not. We may be charmed with the thoughts of grandeur, or the poetic beauties, or thrilling eloquence of the preacher and we may retire delighted as with an intellectual treat, and yet, destitute of the deep consciousness of the quickening and uplifting presence of God. That which is essential to the effectiveness of our religious services is the presence of the Holy Spirit to satisfy the longing of the souls athirst for God.

If any of you who enter regularly the gates of Zion were laid aside by affliction and long detained from

the sanctuary, it is quite possible that you might feel a deep longing to see again your old companions here and to join them in the worship; but have you ever seen so much of God, or felt so much of his power here as would create an equally intense longing to meet Him in his holy habitation? In his exile David's deepest longing was to appear before God, to see the face of God, to bask his soul in the presence divine.

Nothing can make it night to the saintly soul but the hidings of God's face. You may dispense with the light of the lamp, of the moon and of the stars while you have the sun. The good man may be deprived of luxuries, of comforts, of friends, of kindred and of property but it is not night in his soul if he has God with him.

II. David's REMEDY. "Therefore I will remember thee," etc.

1. We have *Faith Remembering.*

What a marvellous "therefore"! How indicative of strong faith! Here is a good man in deep sorrow, persecuted, banished; we might have expected him to say, therefore, I will mourn and complain, I will murmur forth my discontent in language of bitterness. No, he acts more worthily and cries, therefore, I will remember thee, my Helper, my God; I will remember the days of the right

hand of the Most High, I will remember thy wonders of old. Faith casts itself on the past, reviews the history of God's dealings with his own, reckons up in order his gracious interpositions, and taking her stand firmly on these historic facts, faith argues—the Lord who hath delivered me will yet deliver me.

Hermon would furnish David with blessed memories of God's deliverances for his people Israel, when He made a way for them to enter Canaan. Sihon king of the Amorites had refused them a passage through his territory, and stoutly resisted them in their march. From the heights of Hermon David could catch a glimpse of the plain where Sihon the king was slain and his army defeated. The kingdom of Bashan stretched from Jabbok to the base of Hermon, and David could see distinctly the vast plain where Og the king of Bashan, the last of the giants, with his formidable army was conquered. On those plains no less than sixty fortified cities besides villages were captured by the Israelites, the whole country of Bashan subjugated, all the cattle and material property taken as spoil on their triumphal march to Canaan. Psalm cxxxvi., whose every verse ends with the refrain "for his mercy endureth for ever," could never be rehearsed with greater fitness or propriety than by David on Hermon. With the vast stretch of territory before him where great battles had been fought and won by

God's people, I can fancy the Psalmist seizing his harp and filling the valleys with its melodies in the words of this wonderful Psalm: 'O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever. Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever. And Og king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever. And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever,' etc. (17–24). This was the habit of the saints of old. When Asaph was overwhelmed and so troubled that he could not speak, and the soul in agony asking, Will the Lord cast off for ever, etc. (Ps. lxxvii. 7–9), What was his remedy? "I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old." So again in Psalm cxliii. "The enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead." What will the troubled one do? "I will remember the days of old; I will meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands." The divine Bridegroom summons his Spouse the Church to a high mountain; —"Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon, look from the top of Amana, from the

top of Shenir and Hermon." What has He to show her from those lofty eminences? He simply shows her the lion's den, and the mountains where fierce leopards roved and ravaged, but from which He had mightily delivered her. She must remember the signal deliverances of the past, that she may be encouraged to trust Him in the future.

There were seasons when through the lack of these remembrances the faith of Israel failed. Looking only at the enemies and difficulties surrounding them and forgetting past deliverances, they staggered through unbelief. When in the wilderness wanting water, they sullenly asked—Is God amongst us? as if that could not be and they athirst. Dark unbelief argued, that as they had no water it must be that God had forsaken them. On another occasion they fretfully murmur—"Are not these evils come upon us because the Lord our God is not with us?" They blamed God for neglecting them, instead of nourishing their faith by rehearsing the memories of the days when he sent dismay and confusion into the midst of their enemies while filling the hearts of his people with songs of deliverance. When again the forces of the Midianites came down upon Israel, the faith of the brave Gideon for the moment failed him, and he cried, 'Now the Lord hath forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.' Even when the angel of the Lord appeared and cheered

him with the message, 'The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour,' Gideon refused to accept the declaration of the angel and despondingly said, 'O my Lord, if the Lord be with us—Why then is all this befallen us?' No, Gideon, the Lord hath not forsaken his people. They have been unfaithful, and have forsaken him, and he is now turning upon them the sterner aspect of his character, by chastising them for their unfaithfulness. They are simply under discipline. His rod is upon them, but it is still in his hand. He hath not committed it to another. He is still among them, but as an offended God, chastening them in love. So if you look at your sorrows, count your crosses, number your foes, measure their strength, you will sink deeper, your darkness thickens. But do not brood sorrowfully over the superior forces of the Midianites. You have been in greater straits than these, and from them all the Lord hath delivered you. Cheer yourself into confidence with the memories of past victories, and say with David, 'I will remember thee,' etc.

2. *Faith Hoping.* "Hope thou in God."

Faith looks not only backward but forward also. It looks into the past in order that it may look forward without fear. The old Hebrew saints when hemmed round with difficulties, when deliverance seemed impossible, would turn unto the Lord as their

only Hope, and remind Him of what He had done for them in the past, the greatness of his power in days of old, when he brought them out of Egypt, and then plead—Surely after doing all this for us, thou wilt not forsake us now. Repeat thy wonders, make bare thine arm, and let the enemies know that thou art the Lord, and that we are thy covenant people.

So it was with David. "Hope thou in God" are the cheery words he addresses to his soul. There is a faint and common hope founded on the possibility or probability, that after stormy days it may be better, that calm must follow. But this was not David's hope. It was something better; it was a sure, certain hope that shall never make ashamed, a hope that springs from faith, and is one with it. He looked to the Highest for help. Although mourning the absence of God, he sent his cry to his Holy Place, assured that there would be a response. I will look to the hills from whence cometh my help. It is the characteristic of all true faith, that it resorts in prayer to the God of our salvation, and fights its way through all darkness and gloom.

If you turn your back to the sun your shadow will be before you, but if you turn your face to the sun your shadow will be behind you, and you see it not. If you turn your back on God dark shadows will

cross your path, thick darkness will be before you; but with your face towards God you will see light in his light, the darkness is past and the true light shineth. David had this confident hope when he said, I shall yet praise him who is the health, the light of my countenance and my God. There is evident connection between "*his*" countenance and "*my*" countenance. Salvation or help goes forth from the friendly countenance of God and upon the afflicted countenance of the Psalmist. The light of the countenance of God illumines the darkness of his countenance.

3. *Faith Triumphing.*

Two armies are struggling in David's soul—Unbelief and Faith. Unbelief marshals her host and Faith marshals hers.

U. says, Thy capital is in the hand of the usurper, thy rival is young, his followers numerous.

F. replies, That may be, nevertheless the advantage is still mine, for greater is He that is with me than all they that are against me.

U. Thou art banished from thy throne, beyond Jordan away from the sacred land which God hath blessed.

F. What of that, I am still on God's earth. I am not beyond the shadow of his power, nor beyond the reach of the arms of his love.

U. Thou art far away from the Sanctuary where

God dwells, in a wilderness where there are no symbols of the Divine Presence, and no songs of praise.

F. True, but even this solitude may become to me a little sanctuary. Beside this rushing torrent, beneath these beetling crags, amid this rustling forest, I may see God's power and glory as I have seen Him in the sanctuary.

U. Alas, thy sins are aggravated and numberless; the hairs of thy head may be numbered, but who can count thy transgressions?

F. Still, this is no reason why I should despair, for there is a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness.

U. But the heaviest of thy griefs is untold,—God has hidden his face from thee.

F. My case is sad but not hopeless, for the Lord will yet command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.

And so singing David was himself again. David was great in his youth, when he slew Goliath and came forth from the single-handed conflict crowned with the giant's trophies. He was great again when in manhood God delivered him from the hand of Saul, and set him on the throne of Israel, but he is

greater far in this hour of desertion, when his soul persists in looking up to a hidden God for deliverance. It is in these seasons of intense trial that the character of the good man shines forth resplendent, and that his faith achieves its most signal triumphs.

On the Welsh Coast there is a small rocky island with a lighthouse, and in the lighthouse a bell, which on stormy nights rings out its solemn warning to the approaching mariner. When all is calm the bell is not heard, it hangs mute; but when the winds become fierce, and the waves dash high, the bell is set going. There is a bell in the believer's soul. In the calm of uninterrupted prosperity it is silent and still, but when he is swept by the stormy tempests the bell gives out its peal of heavenly confidence, therefore I will remember thee. Though deep calls upon deep, yet, in the midst of these deeps, Faith is not drowned nor is it silenced. The storm swept across Job fierce and long, the bell pealed Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. A succession of calamities stormed and overwhelmed Habakkuk when the fig tree, the vine, the olive tree failed, the fields yielded no meat, the flock cut off from the fold, the herd from the stalls, but his faith gave out the true ring—"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," etc. (iii. 17–19). It was the storm of trouble that awoke

the full harmony of David's harp. The vales of Bethlehem had echoed with the melody of that harp; in the palaces of Judah were its heroic strains heard; the courts of the temple on Mount Zion had resounded with its songs of praise and now Mizar, the little hills around Hermon, hear its glorious sound, and even here its notes are not all of sorrow; the Psalm swells into a holy triumph "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him," etc.

"Two artists were engaged in frescoing the walls of a cathedral, both standing on a high scaffold, when one of them profoundly absorbed with his picture, unconsciously stepped backward to obtain a better view of his work, the other perceiving that his companion was in imminent danger of stepping too far backward and of falling on the pavement below, instantly threw his wet brush with a dash against the picture and marred it, which made the author leap forward with a bound, indignant that his picture should be thus damaged; but it saved his life, for another step backward and he must have perished." God smites the idol of your heart because it usurps the place which belongs to himself. He removes it in order to make room for Himself. God spoils your fond objects and pleasant things in order that you may restore him to the supremacy in your affections. At first you murmur and complain, and think it hard treatment, but presently, when you learn

what you have gained by the loss, you cry, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep thy Word. It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

BUILDING IN SILENCE

And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building.—1 KINGS vi. 7.

THIS and the neighbouring chapters contain a detailed record of the magnificent temple reared by Solomon for the worship of Jehovah. As the ~~residence~~ home of God, it was the chief joy of Israel, and the glory of the Jewish Economy. St. Paul, in his Epistles, frequently alludes to that temple, and employs it as a figure or type or symbol to set forth some great Christian Truth.

Sometimes he speaks of the *individual Christian* being the temple of God. He admonishes the Corinthians not to degrade or pollute the body, for the reason that 'the body is the Lord's.' 'Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you' (1 Cor. vi. 19).

Sometimes he speaks of the Church *collectively* as the temple of God. 'Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them' (2 Cor. vi. 16; 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17).

3. Sometimes Paul speaks of the Church *glorified* under the figure of a temple, not yet completed, but progressing, continually growing unto a holy temple in the Lord (Ephes. ii. 19). The apostle gives a special revelation of the plan and nature of this temple of redeemed sanctified men, and tells us it is built on the Son, by the Spirit, for the Father, and that it will be a theatre for the manifestation of the glory of God to whatsoever spectators Eternity may bring to behold it. Into that, as yet unfinished temple, Jesus our Great High Priest has entered, and, under his Mediatorial supervision, it is rising beautiful and fair. One of the holy prophets (Zech. iv. 7), foreseeing the completion of the redeeming work of Christ, speaks of the top stone brought home to the temple with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it.

In some invisible realm, God is rearing a temple of sanctified souls gathered from this evil world. By the operations of his Spirit and Word, He is now preparing and fitting many of our race for some worthy place in that spiritual edifice. If with the eye of your mind fixed on that heavenly, but as yet incomplete, structure of glorified souls you will read the text you must at once see the applicability of the words. "And the house," etc. It is then to that heavenly temple that we intend to apply the thoughts symbolically set forth in our text.

I. THE NATURAL UNFITNESS OF THE MATERIAL.

The house was built of stone made ready—made fit, implying natural unfitness.

The stone when raised from the quarry is rough, shapeless, unsightly, totally unfit to occupy a place in the walls of a temple. It may serve to fill up a place in a mean and humble structure; but the builder of a temple requires it hewn, shaped, so as to fit with nicety into its appointed place, that the entire building may at last be symmetrical and beautiful, revealing the skill of architect and builder.

Much labour was bestowed on the stones after separation from the rock before they were worthy of a place in the temple on Mount Zion. We all need the mighty working of the Divine Artificer in order to fit us for the service of heaven. Our total unfitness is manifest, unfitness of nature, of character, of disposition, of taste. The structure in which he proposes to place us is a *holy* temple, and without holiness no man can see the Lord. It must be admitted that some men have less roughness, less of what is uncomely, than others. Some are more base, more depraved than others. One man is amiable another passionate; one miserly another generous, but none of these amiable instincts constitute fitness. The heart is bad, depraved, and selfish in all. There is none righteous, no, not one. From the heart proceed, not only evil thoughts and

feelings, such as envy, jealousy, hatred, malice; but also evil actions, such as murder, theft, adultery. The act is the outgrowth, the development of the inward passion. It is therefore not enough to reform the life, or to abandon evil habits: God demands the renewal of the heart, the regeneration of the natural man, the re-creation of him into a new creature.

In what then does this fitness consist?

1. *You must be in harmony with your environment* in heaven. Man is a social being, and will be for ever in his eternal state. Heaven is not only a place, but a society of kindred spirits, all free from sin, firmly united in the bonds of holy friendship and loving brotherhood. In order to be happy in such a society you must yourself be holy, and have a character in sympathy with your companions. To have base desires, evil thoughts, impure longings, in the midst of this holy multitude, would make you shudder, you would shrink with horror from their searching glance. You must be made ready before you are brought thither.

2. You must be *in harmony with the employments of heaven.* Heaven is not a place of inactivity. A heaven where there is nothing but hymn-singing has no great attraction to me. Much as I love to join in the melodious strains of the sanctuary, I cannot but hope that this may not be my only employment for ever. We have very little sympathy with the

sentiment which desires to sit and sing itself away to everlasting bliss. What is to become of all the noble powers with which we as men are endowed—reason, intellect, imagination, this restless desire for action, this intense thirst for knowledge? If these powers of the human soul are to be dormant for ever, what a fearful waste of resources. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable. Complete happiness can be obtained only by the healthful employment of all our faculties. I believe in the sentiment of that noble hymn which teaches, that

> Every power shall find sweet employ,
> In that eternal world of joy.

Ample scope will be given for the development and growth of both mind and spirit. Every employment there will however be of a highly sacred character, and will be joyful only to those who are in perfect sympathy with holiness. It would be well to bring yourself to the test of the solemn question,—Have you now such a taste for, and such a joy in the service of God that you have good reason to hope that you will find a constant heaven in that employment for ever? You must be made ready before you are brought thither.

3. Another qualification is *sympathy with God.*

In heaven God will be the supreme joy of angels and all unfallen spirits; God in Christ will be the

joy of all redeemed spirits for ever. There is only one will in heaven. The will of God is supreme; all other wills, whether of angels or of saints, are in absolute subjection, harmoniously blended with the governing Will, and this makes heaven heaven. Hell on the other hand is full of conflicting wills. No will there can have its own way. Every will is thwarted, defeated. All are slaves, prisoners bound against their will, and their fetters none can break, and this makes hell hell. Let me press upon you another question—Are you so subdued by grace, so moulded after God, so fashioned in character by the Holy Spirit, as to find a perfect heaven in simply yielding cheerful obedience to the will of God for ever? For you to enter heaven with a rebel will would be the introduction of disorder, confusion, misery, it would be the commencement of another war in heaven, and the loyal subjects would have no peace, no rest, until that rebel will was expelled. You must be made ready before you are brought thither.

II. The text intimates that the MATERIAL for building the Temple was BROUGHT FROM A DISTANCE.

The wood-work was wrought from Lebanon-Cedars, the stones also are supposed to have been brought chiefly from the sides of Lebanon; brass "without weight" from the foundries of Succoth and Zaretan; gold, silver, and precious stones from Ophir and

Parvaim. We are now told that the gold of Ophir is the gold of Africa, taken from the gold mines which in our day are worked so successfully. Miners have found there recently tools and implements used by the Phœnicians, proving beyond doubt that the mines were worked by them in or before the days of Solomon. We have similar reasons for believing that our own county of Cornwall contributed some of its minerals to build Solomon's temple. Foreign countries were enlisted in the service. Hiram and his artificers were engaged in the work. The materials were brought from afar.

This fact symbolises the distance, the moral distance, from God of the material with which He builds for himself the heavenly temple. Strangers, foreigners, aliens, enemies, afar off are the expressions employed in the Scriptures to describe our condition when sought and found by a gracious God. When we wrenched ourselves away from Him, we cared not to linger in the neighbourhood of the old home, but prodigal like, we must go into a far country. Our sin gave us a terrible rebound from God. Our conscious guilt made us feel that the further from God the better. An impassable chasm was placed between us and God, from the divine side of that chasm the reproving voice of offended Deity travelled over the abyss to us,—"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, your sins have hid his face from you."

But here lies the wonder, that when we had wickedly abandoned him and banished ourselves to a distance from him, yet, He comes to seek us, because He is eager in love to bring us back to himself. If He wants a temple to inhabit and to show forth his glory, he surely need not come to this sinful rebel world, where all the material is rough, unsightly and unpromising. In other portions of the universe there are materials more easily shaped, more likely to answer the end, nay, materials that need no shaping, that are already fitted to serve his purpose. Yes, there are spirits innumerable in the universe, that have no ruggedness, no fault, that need neither chisel nor hammer, neither hewing nor polishing. If God must have a temple, why not build a temple of these holy loyal intelligences, who are ready to hand, who have always been obedient and faithful, who remain as He made them faultless? No. Not so. He comes and surprises us, by selecting materials the most untoward, the most unfit, that in the transformation he effects his grace may be more fully magnified, and the intelligent universe perceive that he can convert deformity into beauty, and that he can out of these ungainly stones raise up children unto Abraham.

III. The MEANS employed.

Ordinary means only were used in the erection of

Solomon's temple. No miracle was wrought. The usual instruments were employed, the hammer and the axe, and these were wielded by human hands. There was no putting forth of special miraculous power to do that which human and ordinary means could accomplish. The workers were reckoned not by scores, or hundreds or thousands, but tens of thousands. "And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains; besides the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work" (v. 15, 16).

To men hath God committed the ministry of reconciliation. 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels.' Saved ourselves he sends us forth to save others. Some delay the hour of their decision with the hope that God will employ extraordinary or miraculous means to arrest and subdue them. This is a deceitful hope. We have no right to expect that God will deviate from his usual course. He refuses to be regulated by human caprice and fancy. If he did condescend to work a miracle we have no reason to believe that a miracle would be more effectual. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

If angels had been entrusted with the gospel ministry they might bring to the task superior

intellectual powers, a more brilliant imagination, more commanding eloquence, and perhaps greater force of reasoning than the human minister, but they would be lacking in some important essential elements;—experience, practical sympathy with the tempted and lost, conscious enjoyment of the redemption they preach to others. These would be wanting. They were the first heralds to announce that a Saviour was born, but their ministry was only temporary, not permanent. God's order is that man renewed, transformed, called, should proclaim the gospel to those who need it. Destitute of experimental knowledge, angels could only preach the theory. They could not say what the divinely called human minister can.

> What we have felt and seen
> With confidence we tell,
> And publish to the sons of men
> The signs infallible.

Angels could not conduct our sanctuary services, could not give out or join in singing some of our noblest hymns.

> O for a thousand tongues to sing
> My great Redeemer's praise,

could have no meaning in the angel's lips;

> Now I have the ground wherein
> Sure my soul's anchor may remain,
> The wounds of Jesus, for my sin
> Before the world's foundation slain,

would be a false declaration if made by an angel. Your

angel-minister could not join you in singing Toplady's favourite hymn,

> Rock of ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in thee.

When confessing your sins, when pleading for pardon, when repeating the Lord's Prayer, the angel could not lead your devotions. Having no sins of his own to confess, he needs no pardon; having no physical nature demanding food, he need not pray for daily bread. While admitting that the angel may have some gifts far greater and nobler than your human ministers, yet, as saved men called of God, they have essential qualifications which the angel has not and cannot have, and in virtue of their conscious experimental knowledge of sin, of redemption, of their divine anointing, men are better fitted than the angels for preaching the gospel of salvation to the lost. God's order is the best, the wisest, the most effectual. It would be a misfortune a calamity if the messenger were so arrayed so gifted as to command more attention than the message. Blessed and honoured above princes and rulers is the Minister who can say with Paul, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." More blessed still will it be if at the close of life he can say with the same apostle "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the trust."

While the instruments are human the means are *varied*. In the quarry some blast the rock, some hew the stone, some may be seen sawing, others polishing, others removing it when finished. While holding fast the unchanging truth, that the Holy Spirit alone effects the great moral change in every regenerated soul, the means he employs are varied. "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (1 Cor. xii. 4–7).

Stones differ materially in their character and nature. Some will break, others split, others crumble, others polish. Many an unsightly stone on the pebbly beach contains a hidden beauty unsuspected by the unpractised eye. Although covered over with a thick incrustation the skilled eye of the lapidary detects its value. By much labour, hewing, filing, polishing, it may be made fit to adorn princes and nobles. The artificer must have knowledge of the nature of the stone in order to operate upon it successfully, and to make it serviceable. As human beings we differ greatly in temperament, disposition, tastes, qualities and we require different treatment in order to bring out the best that is in us. The discipline that would be a blessing to one might prove a curse to another. God, who holds in his hand the weapon knows perfectly the nature, the qualities, the character of the man He is working upon. He knows where to touch, when to touch and

how to touch. The keen chisel or the rough file is never applied without a purpose, and that purpose is always benevolent. He never by mistake puts too great force into a blow; he never through ignorance gives one too many. Every stroke is needed. We must reckon all in the process of making ready. *Jacob* had many ugly angularities in his character, and God had to employ many a painful discipline in order to make him ready. *Job* had to pass through many a heated furnace, and smelted in its fires before all the dross was burnt out of him. *David* had to suffer the loss of his crown and kingdom, to encounter hateful foes, treacherous friends, and the conspiracy of his ungrateful, criminal son, before he became all that God desired him to be. *Paul* had to endure bonds and imprisonment, persecutions from civil authorities, opposition from false brethren, before becoming the noble heroic martyr that he died. Other stones are prepared and polished by the Master's hand in obscurity. In the lonely cottage, in the room of sickness, where the sufferer languishes for years, deprived of public means of grace and of fellowship with the congregation of saints, no one suspects how precious a stone dwells there. But ultimately, it will be brought to light, and beholders will wonder at the rare finish of its beauty, and the honoured place assigned to it in the temple of our God.

IV. Its GRADUAL ADVANCEMENT. "Forty-six years was this temple in building," said the Jews concerning the second temple. Solomon took seven years to build his temple, but it took David many more years to provide and prepare the materials. After the long, the costly the elaborate preparations of David, Solomon reigned and continued those preparations for four years before the building was actually commenced. The temple was built little by little, the advancement was gradual. Much time and labour were bestowed before the task was completed.

So the great spiritual temple in the heavenlies has been in process for about six thousand years, and even now it seems far from completion. The foundation may be considered laid when the first promise of a Saviour was proclaimed to fallen man. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. The first stone placed on that foundation was righteous Abel. Throughout the centuries the building has been rising beautiful and fair under the superintendence of the Divine Architect. Fresh stones are gathered and piled on the sacred edifice. Every day reports progress. Heaven is not long silent without hearing the glad tidings of some fresh arrival. The harpers are always harping with their harps to celebrate some fresh triumph. The warders at the gate are always syllabling forth the name of some sainted one, who has just escaped from the land of toil and

conflict. Jesus Christ is every moment holding up to the admiration and joy of heaven some fresh trophy of his redeeming grace. During the last hour the company of heaven have increased; the assembly of the Church of the first-born have secured many fresh accessions. An aged pilgrim now enters his long wished for rest; the next moment, some new-born infant passes into his unlooked for glory. From the pallet of straw in the lonely garret, some struggling spirit full of faith and hope has been loosened from suffering flesh and borne by angels to the land of rest. So the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.

V. THE SILENCE with which the temple rises.

"There was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building." We are not to understand this phrase as implying that no implements were employed in the preparation of the material. The rendering in the R.V. helps us to an understanding of the meaning:—"And the house when it was in building, was built of stone made ready at the quarry before it was brought thither." Instruments of iron were used in the quarry. There each stone was hewn, chipped, cut, shaped, made ready and fitted for its destined place. When brought to mount Zion, nothing was needed

but simply fixing it in silence, in wall or pillar, in nave or transept.

This world is the quarry where the souls of men are to be prepared for the kingdom of heaven. St. Paul, when writing concerning the local church at Corinth as a temple, says, that although Christ had laid the foundation and was Himself the Foundation, yet that it was possible for men to build upon it gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; implying that hypocrites may belong to the Church on earth, that the temple of God here, may be polluted, marred by unworthy and unholy members being built into it, but that ultimately, they will be tested by the searching fires of the day of doom. In the heavenly temple there will be no hypocrites, no deceivers, no pretenders; no wood, no hay, no stubble. Every stone there is incorruptible, imperishable, a living stone, made ready before it was brought thither, and shining with all the beauty of righteousness and true holiness.

Whatever change your spirit requires in order to fit you for a place in the heavenly temple must be realised here. This world is the only one where renewal is possible. Probation is limited to our earthly life. I fail to find in the Bible the faintest intimation that there will be a second probation. I cannot, I dare not, I have no authority from the Inspired Book, to proclaim to you the hope of

another chance if you persist in neglecting the present. The warnings, the admonitions, the entreaties, the promises, the threatenings of Scripture are all based on the supposition that your only chance of salvation is limited to the brief period of this mortal life. To miss it here is to miss it for ever. The appointed instrumentalities — Bibles, sanctuaries, ministers, ordinances do their work here. This world as far as we know is the only theatre of the Holy Spirit's operations. We have no intimation that He will act as the convincing or regenerating Spirit in the world to come. In that world no afflictions melt, no ministry warns, no gospel woos, no cross attracts, no Spirit subdues. Probation is over. Destiny rules. Character is fixed and unalterable for ever. Change is impossible.

We have intimations here and there in the Scriptures, that the angels are employed in conveying at death the spirits of the just into the heavenly temple. It will be their office to carry the stones made ready and fix them in their appointed place. But their work is quiet. If they find you unfit, they have no instruments to fit you, and they have no authority to convey you in an unfit condition into the Holy Presence. Look at the dying saint with angels hovering around, waiting to bear the sanctified spirit to its destined place. There is no noise, no parade, no toil. The work is done. The saintly

spirit is calm, the heart trustful, the soul buoyant with hope, so that the angels have nothing to do but bear to the skies the finished work of the Holy Spirit.

Let me press upon you the solemn question—Have you at this moment any moral quality, any characteristic of soul that you would be ashamed to have adhering to your spirit for ever? Are you willing to be for ever what you are at this moment? Remember that what you are when you die you will be for ever.

> Now, only now, against that hour
> You may a place provide.

A word to Christian workers. Get a right conception of the greatness and grandeur of your mission. If God had condescended to employ you in helping to form one of those glorious systems in space—sun or moon or planet, however insignificant or humble the service you rendered, you would feel it an unspeakable honour to be able to point to that vast system and say, "I have had some share in constructing and beautifying that world." But this would be nothing, less than nothing compared with having done something to fit and prepare some spiritual stones for the heavenly temple. This honour have all the saints. It does not belong exclusively to us ministers. It belongs to you mothers who rightly influence your children in the

home; to you visitors to the haunts of sin and sorrow, whose ministry of love is not known to your nearest friends; to you Sunday School teachers, Tract Distributors, Mission Workers, yes, this honour belongs to you all if your work is rightly done. Architects and builders yearning for the poor immortality of posthumous fame often carve their names on the magnificent structures they build in our great cities, but these will perish. If you carve your name on a soul to whom you have been the means of salvation, that name will abide when the structures of architectural pride and skill have perished in the wreck of worlds.

THE MISSION OF THE SON OF MAN.

For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.—LUKE ix. 56.

JESUS CHRIST was now for the last time on his way from Galilee to Jerusalem. He knew well all the solemn tragical events that awaited him there. The time, the place, the circumstances of our death are hidden from us. In compassion to our weakness God has mercifully concealed from us the time of the end. To know it would be a disadvantage, it would agitate the mind, and tend largely to unfit us for the daily responsibilities of life. Our Lord however knew the place, the hour, the circumstances of his death. All these were present to his mind during the whole of this journey. The agony, the spitting, the smiting, the mockery, the betrayal, the denial, the judgment hall, the crucifixion were all pressing upon him now with solemn vividness and appalling nearness, and yet, with all these rising distinctly before his holy vision, "He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." He did not shrink from the undertaking, but boldly

faced the responsibility. Upheld and impelled by his mighty love to man, he trod without faltering the rugged path which conducted him to the Cross with all its shame and agony, and thus he nobly fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, "I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed" (l. 7).

Among his companions on this journey were James and John. Nearing a Samaritan village, Jesus, being weary, tarried outside while the disciples went into the village to seek a home and a night's entertainment for the Master and his little band of followers. Let us pause and wonder. The Being who built the universe, who moulded the spheres, who lit up Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, has become weary and needy, and asks for a lodging from his creatures but asks in vain. Every door in the village is barred against both the disciples and the Master. The householders without exception refuse him hospitality. And why? The record is simple and definite. "And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem" (ix. 53). An old dispute existed between the Jews and Samaritans concerning the proper place to worship. Both worshipped, and they worshipped the same God; but they were not agreed as to where they should worship. The Jew contended that Moriah in Jerusalem was the mount of worship; the Samaritan on the other hand as

eagerly contended that Gerizim in Samaria was the more worthy place. On feast occasions this old quarrel revived with exceeding bitterness. And now that the Samaritans learn that Jesus is going to keep the feast at Jerusalem, and passing by their Gerizim with apparent contempt, the spirit of the old feud revived, and they refused to give the Son of man a place of rest for his wearied frame or a crumb to satisfy his hunger. Burning with indignation, James and John return to their Master. On their way they would rehearse to one another all they had seen and heard. Hard and bitter words were used concerning the heartlessness and inhospitableness of the Samaritans. The conversation served only to inflame their passions, and fire them with revenge. In this spirit the two disciples returned, and when face to face with the Master, even his calm and holy presence did not suffice to keep down the demon of revenge. The pent-up feeling burst forth with volcanic force,—"Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" (ix. 54). Here we have the mild, amiable John who had been favoured with such nearness to Jesus, who had inhaled the breath of divine love, yes, John the beloved disciple allowing the fiend of revenge to rise in his heart, and to speak with his lips. What a contrast between the Master and the disciples! In the

grandeur of self-mastery, and the meekness of love, Jesus is calm and unruffled in spirit, notwithstanding the heartless repulsion of his gentle message, while the disciples are lashed into a tempest of indignation. On the brow of Jesus, I see the dignity and placidity of summer, on the countenance of James and John I see the wintry storm of scowling wrath. Jesus perceiving that the spirit of the storm was within, instantly rebuked it saying—"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." You imagine that this indignation springs from your zeal for me, and for my honour. It is no such thing. The spirit which lashes you into storm is from beneath, not from above. You quote Elias, and seek to justify yourselves by referring to him as an example, but you forget that he lived under another economy, in an age of severity and comparative darkness. I am come to institute a new rule, to usher in a new economy. My mission has been one of love from the beginning, and must be to the end. Have I been so long with you, teaching you by both words and works, and yet have you not understood this, that the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save.

I. The TITLE assumed by Jesus. "The Son of Man."

This title is applied to the Lord Jesus by Daniel vii. 13. "I saw in the night visions, and

behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days . . . there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom." In the New Testament the title is once employed by Stephen, the first Christian Martyr, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 56). St. John in the Book of Revelation, applies the title twice to the glorified Christ. "I saw . . . in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks one like unto the Son of man" (i. 13). "I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man" (xiv. 14). But in all these four instances the title is employed to describe a vision of Christ in his heavenly state; but he is not addressed personally as the Son of man by Daniel or Stephen or John. It is remarkable that throughout the Gospels no person ever addressed the Christ as the Son of man, or even called Him by that name. It is however the most common title used by Him in speaking of Himself. It occurs about sixty times in the Gospels, but in every case it proceeds from his own lips, except in John xii. 30, when the question was put, "Who is this Son of Man?" This however is simply an inquiry of the people concerning Him who applied the title so persistently to Himself.

1. The title "Son of man" affirms his *incarnation*,

his *real humanity*. Heresies concerning this doctrine developed early in the history of the Christian Church. Even in the lifetime of St. John there were some who denied that Christ had come in the flesh, who held that the human Christ was a myth, that the Incarnation was an allegory, that the soil of earth was never trodden, and the air of earth never breathed by the Man Christ Jesus. As if foreseeing the outbreaking of this heresy, our Lord by the frequent appropriation of the title "the Son of Man" uttered a prophetic protest against the error. He knew that the entire Christian system depended upon the truth of the Incarnation. If the Incarnation be nothing more than a myth or fable, then the whole history of our redemption must be mythical, a mere allegory. If there has been no birth in Bethlehem, then there can have been no Gethsemane agony, no shedding of blood, no crucifixion, no burial, no resurrection, no ascension, no intercession, and consequently no cleansing and no salvation for us. But thanks be to God, the testimony of John is true "The Word was made flesh." He became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. In the Book of Canticles the Church in her deep longings for an incarnate Saviour exclaimed, "O that thou wert as my brother!" To which the divine Spouse *then* replied, 'Behold I am coming,' but *now*, 'Behold I am come, for I am the Son of Man.'

Another error appeared early differing materially from the former. Its advocates while admitting the reality of Christ's body of flesh, held that He had no human soul, no human spirit, but that the divinity dwelt in the flesh as a substitute for both soul and spirit. As if anticipating the outbreak again of this heresy, our Lord spoke definitely of both his soul and spirit, and under conditions where it is not possible to interpret the words as referring to his divinity. In the Gethsemane agony He exclaims, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Surely He cannot mean that his Deity was enduring a death agony. It was the human soul of the Redeemer that was made an offering for sin. And again on the Cross, when dying he said, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit." This cannot mean that he commended his Divinity to the Father, but rather his human spirit. When it is said that by act of will He gave up the ghost, it cannot mean that He dismissed the Deity. The testimony of St. Paul is true, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. iii. 16).

2. By becoming man He has *magnified humanity.* Man is the only creature on earth gifted with the power of introspection, of looking inward and studying self. The eagle may look up, and gaze on the distant sun; from its lofty home among the rocks, it

may look down and fix its envious eye on its prey in the deep below. The animal browsing in the field may look forward and snuff up the wind in cooling draughts, or it may look downward to the earth yielding it food. But neither bird nor beast can turn its eye inward and study its own organism. Man can; after looking at himself all round and casting a thoughtful glance inward, the Psalmist filled with amazement exclaimed, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." But whatever wonderfulness there may be in human nature physically or mentally, that which magnifies and ennobles it most is the fact that the Son of God has raised it into union with his Divine Nature, so that now we may speak of the Divine Man, although we may not speak of a divine angel.

Solomon's temple was richly adorned with gold and silver and the most precious things from every portion of the then known world. No expense was spared to make it worthy of the holy purpose for which it was reared. It was the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth, and the glory of Israel. But with all its material splendour it was only the work of the hands of the craftsman. Its supreme glory was the descent of the Shecinah, the incoming and the indwelling of God; the Divinity entered it, consecrated it with the sublime benediction—"This is my rest for ever. Here will I

dwell for I have desired it." When the Jews were taken into captivity the Babylonians demolished the temple, took away the Ark of the Covenant, and the Shecinah Glory departed with it. What became of the Shecinah during the fourteen generations from the carrying away into Babylon until the birth of Christ? Did it wander through the universe as if in quest of a fitting place of rest, or did it withdraw into unknown solitude to await the advent of Immanuel? I am inclined to think that the Star of Bethlehem was the Shecinah. It could not have been one of the heavenly constellations. Unlike any thing we know of them it travelled in a straight line; it paused over the manger; it was too near the earth to be one of the heavenly bodies; and moreover, it was visible in the daytime. In a lowly manger in an obscure village, there lies a Babe miraculously begotten, free from the taint of sin, on that memorable morning the Divine Shecinah comes forth from its hiding in the form of a day-star, travels in a direct course until it comes over the place where the Young Child lay, where it halts, and finding in that Infant a place prepared of the Lord, it enters that sacred temple of flesh and consecrated it with the benediction as of old, "This is my rest for ever. Here will I dwell for I have desired it." Henceforth I see in One Person, the Son of Man and the Son of God. Our

nature is honoured more than that of any other creature, by its union with the Divine in the Person of our adorable Lord. Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? and Whom say ye that I am? was our Lord's question to His apostles. Simon Peter answered—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord declared this confession to be true, and to have been revealed from heaven, and He blessed him who uttered it.

3. The title implies that *Jesus owns humanity.* It is remarkable that our Lord in speaking of Himself seldom employs his loftiest divinest titles. We know not how many titles He owns. He may have a title to signify his relation to each creature, each object, and each law in the universe. He may have myriads of titles unimagined by us. If an angel attempted to embroider all his titles on the ample robe whose train filled the temple, he would cover the vast space long before exhausting the titles, and despairing to find space for all, he would, hoping to include all in one, insert as his last—"Wonderful." Solicitous to bring himself near our humanity, instead of awing us into distance by using Divine Names, Christ allures us into friendship, fellowship and brotherhood, by the chosen title, the Son of Man. "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii. 11). Who is he that

sanctifieth but Christ? Who are they that are sanctified but the saints? Both the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one. Of one what? Of one nature; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. He never calls the angels brethren, the angels never call him brother. They cannot, for there is no affinity of nature. But equipped with *our* nature,

> Of our flesh and of our bone,
> Jesus is our brother now,
> And God is all our own.

Blessed Saviour, our humanity is in the dust, degraded, guilty, utterly unworthy of thy regard. "No matter, I will own it, for I am the Son of man, and ye are my brethren. I have assumed the nature of man, and descended in that nature, to lift the ruined out of the dust. I mean that nature to be what it was of old, a kingly nature. Like an exiled monarch it has been discrowned and dethroned, but I have become the Son of man in order to bring that nature back from exile and servitude, to its throne and kingship for ever."

This title comprehends the race. The son of David was preferable to the Jew, but though that was true of him it was too narrow, too Jewish for him who came on a mission of salvation for the race. In the lips of Christ the title Son of man implied a

protest against Jewish exclusiveness, as well as a pledge and prophecy of his universal dominion. The Jew imagined that Jehovah was the God of the Hebrews only, Jesus declared him to be the God and Father of all believers. The Jew thought that the kingdom of heaven was the privilege of Israel alone, Jesus declared that it was open to the entire world, and invited all men to enter in. The Jew believed that salvation was for his own race alone, Jesus overleaped the bounds of Jewish prejudice, and openly declared—"God so loved the world," etc. (John iii. 16).

Looking at man under sin, in degradation, one feels ashamed of humanity, but when I see my nature in union with divinity in the Person of the Lord Jesus, I may exult in my manhood. My nature occupies the throne of the majesty on high, to its authority every angel bows; at its feet every creature in heaven casts his crown, and to its honour the myriads of holy ones sound forth their noblest anthems. The enthroned Christ is still the Son of man, and in our nature rules the universe, and will ultimately as the Son of man judge the race.

II. The Mission of the Son of man.

1. We have a *Negative* view of his mission. He came *not to destroy*. The two disciples displayed the spirit of vengeance; they would have stretched out their hands to grasp the weapons of God to bring

destruction upon the villagers. They wanted fire from heaven to consume. In mercy, the destructive forces of nature are not under the control of wayward man. Our Lord strongly reproves the revengeful spirit of his disciples by the word, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives."

"To bring fire on earth he came."

But the fire He brings is not consuming, but purifying; it is not the fire of vengeance, but the fire of love. It consumes not the sinner, but his sin.

(1.) *There was no need for Jesus to become man in order to destroy.* He could have destroyed without coming. There was no necessity for him to take the nature of man in order to punish men, any more than there was for him to take the nature of angels in order to punish the angels that sinned. He might have retained his throne and his glory, without descending into the lower parts of the earth, and yet have destroyed. A word from his lips, a glance of his eye, a fiat of his will would have sufficed to destroy. Myriads of mighty messengers wait around his throne to receive and fulfil his behests, and he could have sent them to execute destruction. He had only to speak, and a legion would have taken the vials of his wrath and poured them on transgressors. The material universe is stored with destructive elements, all of which are his servants,—fire, hail,

tempest, electricity ;—he could have summoned any one of these to go forth and overwhelm with sudden destruction all his enemies. At his bidding the stormy wind can lay waste a whole population, the rain can deluge the world, and a worm can destroy the proud monarch in the might of his power. The work of destruction he could have entrusted to others without coming himself, but the work of saving he could not commit to any creature whatsoever. He must undertake that Himself; and in order to save, He must become man among men to live and die. No other arm could bring salvation; He must bare his own arm if humanity is to be rescued from its deep abyss.

(2.) There was no need for him to come to destroy, because *the element of destruction was already in man himself.* Wandering through the summer forest covered with richest foliage, we have come upon a solitary tree destitute of life and beauty; barrenness is visible to its topmost bough; not a leaf quivers on its branches. If you want to destroy it, you need not take the axe, and with stern blows laboriously cut it down. Let it alone. Death is at the root, decay is working its destruction. It will perish of itself. We have seen the dwelling in flames, smoke rushing through every aperture, darkening the very heavens, sparks and flames hissing their upward way. In order to destroy the building you need not toil and

dig at the basement to undermine the foundation. Let it alone; it needs no destroyer. The destructive force is already in it, and is even now working certain ruin. "Wickedness burneth like a fire." Sin is that which destroys the man. Neither God nor angel, nor any creature need touch him. He is his own destroyer, and is working his own ruin. Let him alone, absolutely alone, let the universe withdraw from him, and it will be found that the destructive force is within. What are the oaths, the blasphemies, ribaldry, the impiety which salute our ears, and pollute the air in our streets? What are the outbursts of fierce passions resulting in crime, violence and murder? They are only the upworking of the smouldering fires of evil in the human soul. The fire which is to destroy you is in your own bosom. It may be partly smothered for a time, but God has only to withdraw the agencies of his grace and Spirit, and in a moment it will become an all-consuming flame.

Sin does not manifest itself equally or in like manner in all men, but it works the same destruction in all who are under its control. In some it breaks forth in a life of immorality and crime; in others it works inwardly on motives, purposes and passions under the cover of external morality. These men are described by our Saviour as whited sepulchres outwardly, but inwardly full of putrefaction and

rottenness. There are volcanic mountains covered with snow. You would not suspect that beneath that soft calm white covering, there was a heaving sea of liquid fire. Among us are men who have a fair covering of morality, who, to human seeming are irreproachable, but within whom wickedness burneth like a fire. Pride, covetousness, anger, wrath, revenge and all uncharitableness are the constituent elements of that fire, and, unless extinguished by the blood of atonement, it will break forth and blast and destroy every thing great and noble in your nature.

(3). He has not come to destroy for *it is contrary to his nature to destroy.* He charges home upon man the guilt of self-destruction. "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself." Man perishes because he spurns the all-sufficient help of the Redeemer. He is merciful and gracious, *full* of grace and truth. Who can measure this fulness? What is the height of God? Infinite. Depth? Infinite. Length? Infinite. Breadth? Infinite. These infinitudes are full of grace.

While on earth, he was healing in the midst of suffering, mercy in the midst of misery; life in the midst of the dying and the dead. When refuge failed everywhere, it was worth while applying to him in every extremity. He became the refuge of those whose every refuge had been swept away.

2. The *Positive* aspect of His Mission. He came to save. This suggests *the benevolent character* of his mission. It originated in his compassion for the lost. He was moved with compassion when he saw the multitude because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd (Matt. ix. 36). The idea present to the Saviour's mind was that of sheep scattered abroad throughout a region where beasts of prey abounded, already fleeced, torn and bleeding, run down, prostrate, and unable to rise, without a shepherd to help and heal. Perceiving that this was the condition of humanity his heart to its depths was moved with pitying love. He realised as no creature could the awful meaning of sin and destruction. The thought of man coming under the terrible penalties of transgression pressed upon his mind; equipped as the Son of man he stepped into the breach, interposed between offending man and the offended God. He offered Himself as a Substitute to the insulted Lawgiver saying, "Here am I, send me."

While He sojourned on earth, his miracles *on* the bodies of men were all miracles of healing, and intended to be types of his higher healing of souls. The miracles wrought *for* men on food on winds, on waves and on evil spirits, were all benevolent and not destructive. The only instance in which he employed his power to destroy was in the fig tree,

which withered away beneath the frown of his displeasure, because it yielded no fruit, but leaves only. In his deepest agony on the Cross, when we might have expected nothing but curses on those who cursed him, yet, we hear nothing but blessing. On the eve of his departure from earth he lifted up his hands and blessed. The last sight which earth caught of him was that of blessing. That departing gift is here still, it runs through the ages and reaches even unto us.

Jesus came to save. This was the greatest idea that had ever been entertained in behalf of the race. Some have laboured nobly by social reforms to benefit a small portion of mankind; others have contributed to the intellectual wealth of the world. No human benefactor ever conceived the idea of a possible salvation for the world. But Jesus did. and this with a perfect knowledge of the terrible condition of society, and the injuries which sin inflicts on the soul. He came to provide a remedy infinitely efficacious, and available for all. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

This marks *the preciousness of humanity.* We save the precious, not the worthless, not trifles. Jesus Christ understands the absolute, and relative value of all things and of all beings. He neither

overestimates nor underestimates any thing. The fact that He came from heights of glory which no wing could scale into depths of humiliation which no line could fathom on purpose to save men, is of itself a sufficient proof of the preciousness of humanity. When we consider what the coming involved, the surrender of his original glory, the subjecting himself to ignominy, agony and death, the object for which all this was undertaken, must be very precious in his sight. If the redemption of the soul is precious, the soul for which the Infinite Sacrifice was offered must be infinitely precious in the estimation of the Redeemer. If ever tempted to depreciate self, to neglect or injure your nature, let the thought come upon you—'So precious am I in the estimation of Jesus that He gave his Infinite Self a ransom, a sacrifice in order to save me.'

God puts precious things in safe keeping. He acts on this principle in the natural world. Where does he put the life of a tree? Not in the leaves, not in the branches, not in the trunk; you may pluck off the leaves, cut down the branches, and even hew down the trunk to its base, but the life still remains in the roots, hidden in the depths beneath the soil, where the heavy tramp of beasts cannot crush it, and the fierce storm cannot blast it. Where does God place your own life? Not

in the skin, the flesh, the bone the sinew. You may amputate the limb, or even limbs, you may cut off some of the organs of sense, the eye or the ear, and yet life remain in the very centre of your being, and throb through all that is left. The precious ore, the costly minerals are buried far down in the bowels of the earth; man must toil hard and dig deep before he can possess them. When Jesus Christ saves you where does he place your life—your new spiritual life? Not in books or ordinances or sacraments; these may be of incalculable service in sustaining, quickening and strengthening the spiritual life, but you may be cut off from all these, you may be banished like John in Patmos, you may be imprisoned like Paul and John Bunyan, and yet, have the life of God within, in exile or in prison. This life is hid. Where? With Christ in God. As one of the Puritan Fathers says, You are thus castled in a double fortress—a double divinity—Christ in God and you in Christ. No wonder that St. Paul thus walled round with omnipotence, hurled defiance at both earth and hell, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Nothing can but your wilful departure from your impregnable fortress.

This life is hidden for *future manifestation.* Winter strips nature of verdure and fertility; barrenness and death are everywhere visible, but

life slumbers beneath the soil, and under the mantling snow; when the sunny spring melts the snow, opens the inlets of nature, sends his genial fires into the earth's bosom, reviving the countless roots, eliminating the slumbering forces, then nature bursts forth into life and beauty. The world does not now perceive or appreciate the moral beauties of the good man. His surroundings are somewhat repulsive. Poverty, distress, calamities give a forbidding aspect to his external life, and men do not draw near enough to discern the beauty of his inner life—the hope, the love, the peace, the joy, the patience which dwell within, and which make the soul shine with purest lustre. But the day of the manifestation of the sons of God is coming when free from adventitious circumstances and environments, the soul will shine forth resplendent with all the beauties of heaven, and the virtues of Incarnate Deity. Then Jesus Christ will hold up his sanctified Church, his saved ones, to the admiration of the intelligent universe as the perfection of His workmanship, and the most glorious triumph of His redeeming grace. He will come to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe.

Let us hold fast the doctrine of the Incarnation, that Jesus Christ became real man for men to die. Errors are rampant. Every aspect of Christianity

is vigorously assailed. The war is raging chiefly around the Person of our Lord. He is the centre of controversy. In the history of the world there never was a greater need for solemnly repeating the admonition of John, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." Suffer not these assaults to shake your faith in the testimony of our Lord "the Son of man is come." Whence did He come? He came from infinite heights of glory. Whither did He come? He came into the deep abysses of this sinning world, deep as man needed him to come. Years ago the "Royal Charter" laden with golden ore from Australia was wrecked on the Welsh Coast. For weeks divers were employed to bring up from the sunken vessel all the treasures they could find. On a certain day, the man whose turn it was to go down in the diving bell, equipped himself for the task and descended. He was no sooner down than he gave the signal to his comrades above to bring him up again. This done his companions twitted him with not having reached the wreck, with having done nothing, with having put them to needless toil. After a few moments playful suspense, he opened his hand and showed them a large nugget of gold, and then exclaimed, See here is the proof that I reached the wreck and actually touched the sunken treasure. Our poor wretched humanity has been

wrecked, and is gone down into deep abysses of darkness and guilty shame.

> Plunged in a gulf of dark despair
> We wretched sinners lay.

But thank God, the Son of man arrayed in mortal flesh, descended into the depth in search of the lost treasure, he touched it, he seized a precious nugget in the shape of an immortal soul, and to that soul he whispered "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." With this he ascended on high, entered the celestial city, and holding up the rescued one to a witnessing heaven he said, "Here is the proof that I reached the wreck in its lowest depth. Deep as may be the abyss into which man is plunged, my arm has reached and rescued him. Behold ye heavens, this is the proof that in my deepest humiliation, I am mighty to save and strong to deliver."

Be admonished by the solemn declaration—"And they went to another village." The honour of receiving and entertaining our Lord was offered to these villagers, but they refused. They would have displayed greater wisdom had they turned out of bed and home to spend the night beneath the stars, in order to give entertainment to Him who made the stars. Indignant he turns away and with his disciples enters another village. On his way

casually meeting a stranger he complains, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Foul and fierce passions are entertained by you, unclean birds nestle within while the Redeemer is excluded. By your rejection of him you compel him to wander in quest of another home, and as he departs he publishes your folly, and his own disappointment to a listening universe. Debasing thoughts find a welcome in these hearts, evil spirits lodge there, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

His turning away from that village was a terrible judgment. It suggests that we ministers are not bound to continue to preach to a resisting people. We may, without betraying our trust, imitate our Lord, and go to others more likely to receive our message. It is not for ever that Jesus Christ will press his claims upon you; it is not for ever that he will allow his messengers to enforce those claims. He may at any moment bid them go to others, while he leaves you destitute for ever of the comforts of his presence. Your last Sabbath *must* come; your last sermon *must* come; your last offer *must* come. They may come soon, they may come now. This may be your last Sabbath, your last sermon, your last offer. And shall there be a last refusal? God forbid.

SALVATION IN HARMONY WITH DIVINE RELATIONS

For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.—ISAIAH xxxiii. 22.

THE advent of sin into the world is one of the greatest mysteries of the universe. It was the advent of rebellion where every thing was loyal; of deformity where every thing was beautiful; of discord where every thing was harmony; of hatred where every thing was love; of misery where every thing was bliss; of evil where every thing was good. It was the introduction of a mighty force for evil in direct antagonism to God, and to every thing God ever made. Now that sin had found a footing in this world, it became a problem, perhaps the most perplexing and difficult ever known,—How the Divine Government should deal with sin, to prevent its spread, to restrain its action, to subdue its power, and, if possible, to expel it from the throne it had usurped. Known to us are two methods in which the divine Government has dealt with sin. The first is that of *stern, vigorous, prompt Justice.* This

was the principle adopted in the case of the fallen angels. Sin in them became at once its own punishment. They were simply left to reap the fruit of their own doings. Retribution fell on them immediately, without restraint, without alleviation, without intervention. They struck a blow against the Lord that made them, that blow rebounded on themselves, and smote them down to perdition.

In the case of man God adopted another method of dealing with sin—a method of *merciful and Mediatorial intervention.* By redemption, He proposes to meet evil in its own temple, even in the heart of man, and there restrain, subdue, destroy and abolish it. By exterminating evil from the heart, he proposes to deliver man from its dominion, its power, its pollution, and meeten him for the immortal society of the holy and blessed. Now arises the difficult question—How can this be done? If done at all, it must be done in perfect harmony with the attributes and the character of God. He can do nothing contrary to his nature, or dishonouring to his law. If he saves, pardons, and acquits the guilty, it must be in perfect harmony with his law and government. This is just what He does, and this is just what the text says He does. He bears toward us the threefold relation of King, Lawgiver, Judge; we sustain towards him the threefold relation of traitors, lawbreakers, and

condemned criminals, and yet He can save us, and save us in a way that will reflect honour upon Himself, and be perfectly satisfactory to us.

Jehovah King, Jehovah Lawgiver, Jehovah Judge is our Jehovah Saviour. All the four offices blend and harmonise in One glorious Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. JEHOVAH IS OUR KING, and although we are rebels against his Kingly Authority, yet, He can save us. His right to govern us is based on his Creatorship. He made us and not we ourselves. All our powers of body, mind and spirit are gifts—*His* gifts. Not one of them is of our own production. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. By whom? Not by ourselves. By whom then? By God the Creator of all things. He hath made all things for Himself, for his service, for his will. Had the race of man continued obedient to his Will, we should have continued happy and safe under his benevolent and holy rule. But the reverse of this has taken place. We have rebelled. By sinning we have done our utmost to discrown Him, to shake the pillars of his throne, to banish Him from us and from the world He hath made. We thus provoked his anger, and deserved to perish. Had He doomed us to woes unrelieved and unending, every attribute of his nature, every law in the

universe, every being in creation would have given the acquiescing Amen, Just and true are all thy ways.

Yet, when retribution with unrestrained force was about to fall, when there was nothing to hinder, when truth and justice demanded the execution of the dread sentence, the curse was rolled back, wrath suspended, punishment deferred, guilty man spared, and complete eternal deliverance provided and freely offered.

How came this to pass? Not by a mere act of arbitrary Sovereignty. We speak reverently. There are things which God cannot do. He cannot do an injustice. He cannot speak or act an untruth. He cannot deny his word; he cannot deny Himself. He cannot come into the midst of a rebel world armed to the teeth against his Majesty, and say—'I know that all men are traitors to my rule, rebels against my authority; all deserve to die, and without exception ought to die, for I have solemnly declared that death is the penalty of rebellion; but as Sovereign Lord, I select some from amongst them who shall not die, who shall escape the penalty, whose rebellion shall be overlooked, who shall be treated as if they had never rebelled, and ultimately be crowned with glory and immortality, like all loyal beings in my dominions. I give no reason for thus acting. I claim the right to do it by an act of Sovereign Will.'

We must all feel that this was impossible to God. This would be to abolish all distinction between virtue and vice, between obedience and rebellion; this would be to overthrow law and right, to enthrone lawlessness, and reward crime: God could never do this.

Notwithstanding that He is our King, and that we are traitors who have dared to lift our hand to smite the Majesty on High, *yet*, YET, He saves us. Jehovah is our King, and He will save us.

But How? If he saves us, it must be in perfect harmony with his Kingship. And so he does. The Son of God equipped with human nature steps into the breach, stands between the rebels and the Majesty they have offended. The naked sword in the hand of the angered King is about to fall and smite, but Jehovah's Fellow bares his breast to receive the smiting. The sword was sheathed, but it was sheathed in the heart of the King's Son, and its fiery flame quenched in his precious blood. The cloud stored with the righteous displeasure of the insulted Monarch broods over the sinning race. Its quivering bolt was averted from us, for it fell on the Divine Man with all its force. He stood the shock and we found safety under his blessed shelter. Jehovah is our King, and He will save us.

The Cross, not hell, is the strongest expression of God's estimate of the baseness and enormity of sin.

So great an evil was it in the sight of God that He thought it not too much to unite the Infinite to the finite, the Divine to the human in order to deliver man from its dominion and pollution. With your Incarnate Lord fully in view enduring the ignominious agonising death of the cross you have the most solemn evidence of the hatefulness of sin and of the infinite cost it was to God to redeem man from its power and penalties. The strongest condemnation of sin which even God himself could give was given when He sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.

II. SALVATION IN HARMONY WITH LAW. Jehovah is our Lawgiver, and He will save us.

This clause teaches that God sustains towards us the relation of Lawgiver, but the difficulty in the way of saving us is in the fact, that we sustain towards him the relation of lawbreakers. There can be no question as to our guilt. We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no, not one. No man can look up to heaven and say, I am as pure as the stars; I am as sinless as the angels; I am as holy as God. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and his word is not in us."

If then we have all sinned, the law cannot justify, nay the law condemns us. The penalty of disobedience is death. The Lawgiver cannot by an act of mere sovereignty remit that penalty. He cannot ignore or override the law which He himself has made. He cannot say, "I will to save this or that lawbreaker despite the law. The violated law must stand aside; its claims resisted; its rights disregarded; its penalties remitted without its consent, and it must submit to the insult without compensation." If this were done, the Maker of the law would become the breaker of the law. This can never be.

Salvation in order to be satisfactory to the sinner himself must be bestowed in harmony with law, and must have the consent of the law. I am conscious that I have broken the law, that I am under condemnation, that the law denounces her curse upon me. To secure for me abiding peace, I must have the assurance that the law consents to my pardon, to blot out my sins from her book of remembrance, and to cancel the sentence of condemnation. I must be assured that the law will never lift up her voice to condemn me, nor stretch out her hand to smite me, nor throw open the sources of wrath to overwhelm me. Her thunder must be hushed, her lightning quenched, her displeasure pacified, the wrathful wrinkles on her frowning brow must be

smoothed, or her presence, instead of giving me rest, will only distract me with terrors.

Redemption through atonement meets this difficulty. Jehovah Lawgiver becomes Jehovah Saviour. But how? Let me take you back to the Mount of the Law, and linger with me a moment around Sinai, to behold the great and strange things done there. In Exodus xix. 12 Jehovah Lawgiver addresses these solemn terrible words to Moses. "And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about (Sinai) saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it, whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live." This was the mount that might not be touched. It was death to touch it. Passing on to ch. xxiv. 9–11 we read that Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel—seventy-four men, all of them sinners, touch the mount with their feet, climb its slopes, enter the cloud, penetrate the awful darkness, see God, eat and drink in his presence, and yet they did not die. Jehovah did not smite them. He said he would, and yet he forbears. But how can He spare them, and yet be true to his word? For the explanation we must look at what took place in the valley before the mount was touched. An altar was

reared, the sacrifice laid thereon, the sins of the people were confessed over the sacrifice, the officiating priest with his hand pressing on the head of the victim, and by confessing transferred symbolically the sins to the victim. Now God with the fire of his jealousy laid his hand upon the victim, consumed it, reduced it to ashes, and by burning the sacrifice burnt the sins that by confession were ceremonially laid upon it. Now that the sins are consumed, the sinner is free. "Upon the nobles of Israel He laid not his hand," etc. And why? He has already laid his hand upon the sacrifice, and consumed the sins laid upon it, so that He cannot lay his hand upon both the sinner and the sin. If the sin is gone, the sinner is free. He is our Lawgiver, and yet he will save us.

Another illustration of this precious truth may be found in the Ark of the Covenant. Within the Ark were the tables of the Law, over the Law was the lid, the covering, called the propitiatory or mercy-seat; over that again the Cherubim in bending thoughtful attitude; between the Cherubim the Glory, the uncreated symbol of the Divine Presence seated in majesty on the Mercy-seat. This then is the teaching of this profound symbolism. Mercy has built her throne on Law; so that when the transgressor approaches God to plead for pardon, and when God graciously bestows it, the Law is

present, not to condemn, but to approve, not to object but to acquiesce in the pardon, that pardon proceeds from mercy and that mercy is founded on law. Jesus was wounded for our transgression, bruised for our iniquities.

'Tis finished the Messiah dies
Cut off for sins but not his own,
Accomplished is the sacrifice,
The great redeeming work is done.

Now that the Law has vindicated her own majesty and purity by smiting our Substitute, the Law can, not only acquiesce, but also triumph in your pardon, and be more signally magnified by your salvation than by your condemnation, so that we can challenge you to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy for Jehovah Lawgiver is also Jehovah the Saviour. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the rightousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." Here Jesus Christ is spoken of as an Advocate or Pleader. What is He pleading for? Forgiveness. This seems to imply that in the court of heaven someone is pleading against us, accusing us, while Jesus having undertaken our cause is

pleading for us. Who is this opposing pleader? Who there is against the sinner? Not the Father, for He in infinite mercy has appointed the Son to the office and is as much for the sinner as the Son Himself: not the conscience for that pleads within the sinner and there condemns him: not Satan for he has been cast out of heaven and has no place there. Who then pleads against the sinner? It is the Holy Law of God according to the teaching of Jesus Christ. Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father, my business is not to accuse but to plead for you. There is one that accuseth you even Moses in the law. If we ask Who is he that condemneth? The Law replies, I condemn. The sinner has outraged the holy law of God and is under condemnation. The sinner cannot deny or disprove the accusation. But the Divine Advocate is there and shows Himself as newly slain, saying, I have endured the curse for him, I have been wounded for his transgressions, the chastisement of his peace has been laid upon me and I claim for him forgiveness. The plea is admitted, the advocate prevails, the sinner is free; in the presence of the sacrifice the Law is magnified and announces the acquital of the penitent believer, Neither do I condemn thee, go in peace. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Jehovah is our Lawgiver, and yet, He will save us.

III. SALVATION IN HARMONY WITH JUDGESHIP.

Jehovah Judge is also Jehovah Saviour.

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The God-man will then fix and announce the eternal destiny of each individual in the presence of the whole human race. The vast assembly will be divided into two portions, the one doomed to darkness and despair, the other destined to glory and immortality. But is not every man judged at the hour of death and his eternal destiny then irrevocably fixed? Yes. What need then of a general judgment? One important, if not the most important purpose is this,—the general judgment will give the Judge of all the opportunity of vindicating Himself. He must be justified when He speaks; He must be cleared when He judges. Assembled worlds on that day must be satisfied that every decision is in perfect harmony with truth and righteousness. No lost one must go to his doom with even a suspicion that the Judge has done him a wrong, or that his sentence is arbitrary and unjust. No saved one must be allowed to pass to his reward with the suspicion that some loved one has been unjustly left behind to the bitterness of retribution. Take the case of husband and wife. The husband is condemned, the wife is acquitted and saved. God must satisfy both that the destiny of each is right and just, that the Judge is perfectly impartial. The

man must go to his retribution and the woman to her heaven without the slightest misgiving about the integrity of the Judge; and with the fullest conviction that the abode of evil is the right place for the one, and the abode of purity the right place for the other. Or take the case of parents saved and children lost. In the depth of parental tenderness we may conceive the parents asking, Why is the son we loved so well not saved? And again, notwithstanding the bitter memories of despised privileges and neglected warnings, we can conceive the son asking Why am I lost, and my parents saved? Why have their many earnest prayers for me remained unanswered? Why this great impassable gulf between me and them for ever? It cannot be that the parents shall pass to the skies and their son to perdition with any lingering doubt concerning the righteousness of the Judge. For father and mother to enter heaven with even the shadow of a suspicion that the sentence pronounced upon their son was unjust or severe, would mar heaven to them for ever. They could not find unrestrained delight in the God whom they suspected to have done an eternal wrong to their loved one. For his own sake and for the sake of all his subjects throughout his vast dominions, God must silence every objection, dissipate every suspicion. He will abundantly honour himself by convincing every being in the universe that his

administration has been perfectly just and impartial. Every mouth must be stopped. Without a dissentient voice the acquiescing Amen will be volunteered by the intelligent universe. The lost will for once help the redeemed; hell will for once help heaven to swell the anthem, 'Just and true are all thy ways thou King of saints.'

How will the Judge clear Himself? Not by pleading Sovereignty. We cannot conceive of Him saying to assembled worlds on that great day:—'I am sovereign disposer of all events, of all beings, of all worlds. I do as I will with each and all without giving any reason. I have endowed you with reason but I intend to treat you as though you had none. You may be dissatisfied with your destiny, or with the destiny of some in whom you are lovingly concerned; you may suspect me of having done you or your loved ones an injustice, but that will not concern me. You may carry your suspicion with you to your doom, it may cleave to your spirit for ever; I will not attempt to remove it or to convince you that I am right.' This would be an unreasoning despotism, and one shudders at the thought of the righteous Judge dealing thus with his rational creatures. God is a reasonable Being, and he has made me a reasonable being; and have I not a right to expect that, when He fixes my destiny for eternity, he will fully satisfy me that his decision is right, that

he has done me no wrong? He will justify Himself when he speaks, and clear Himself when he judges.

But How? When the dividing line is drawn between the righteous and the wicked, the one placed on the right, the other on the left of the Judgment-throne, the Judge will be able to say,— Notwithstanding that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God, yet, in infinite compassion I made a provision for the removal of sin, for the deliverance of every man from its power, guilt and pollution, and for his complete restoration to purity and bliss. These on my right availed themselves of that provision, fulfilled its conditions, sought with true repentance and faith the application of that redemption to their heart, and they stand here to-day without sin. Who will lay any thing to their charge? Who is he that condemneth? Demons look at them and are constrained to confess that they cannot find a stain; angels with their eyes of flame behold them, and pronounce them spotless; God himself with his omniscient glance searches them through and through, and declares them without a fault. Having therefore sought and found complete deliverance from sin, having sympathies, purposes, motives, affections in perfect harmony with holiness, they are entitled to an admission into a world of purity and bliss. Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.

Turning then to the other side the Judge will be able to say,—All these on my left I have loved, with an infinite compassion, I have died to redeem them, my salvation was as free to them as to the others, and would have been as effectual had they received it, but they spurned it. I shed my blood for them, but they trampled it under foot. I opened the kingdom of heaven for them, but they refused to enter; I closed the gates of hell, but they thrust them open and persisted in entering in; I sent them my Word, my servants, my Spirit, to reason to urge and remonstrate with them, but they resisted every agency, they chose to remain in sin, and hence the curse of sin is still upon them unremoved, and now the law condemns them, conscience accuses them, heaven frowns upon them, the day of their visitation is over. I can do no more for them. They have chosen death and they must have it.

What then is the inference? If you perish it will be your own fault; the entire responsibility of your lost condition is with yourself, and will rest on you alone, and for ever. God has in love anticipated every difficulty, and provided for it. There were difficulties great and serious, difficulties in the Nature and character of God, difficulties arising from the relations he sustained to us as King Lawgiver and Judge. But redemption through sacrifice has completely removed all these, and there

now remains not a single difficulty on the Divine side. Taking the Cross as his standpoint and witness, God solemnly declares to a perishing world "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). I would that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. The death of my Only Begotten Son on the Cross testifies to the reality of my love, and the intensity of my desire to save all men. "God so loved the world," etc., so that if you perish, it will not be because you are sinners, but rather because you spurn the remedy, and reject the only Redeemer.

Sin and punishment are inseparable. You cannot divorce them. Where the one is, the other must be. If sin remain, you cannot escape punishment; for sin is its own punishment. The only method to avoid punishment is to abolish sin. You cannot get rid of the penalty except by getting rid of the sin. God's system of redemption provides for this. 'For this purpose was the Son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.' Once hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, but when he shall appear the second time, it will be without sin, unto salvation to all them that look for his appearing. He came the first time bearing your sin, and offering to cancel it. If you

refuse he will come at last without sin, and you will have to bear the awful burden of your own guilt for ever, and in addition to your guilt, the terrible sin of spurning his proffered and saving help.

Nothing that God ever made is to be annihilated. Matter may change its form, its appearance, its relations, but science teaches us that not an atom will ever cease to be. God has however provided for the annihilation of sin in the believer through atonement. This is the mystery of redemption, it destroys that which destroys humanity. It saves the sinner by destroying his sin. Sin is not God's creature, it belongs not to his creation; it is not an essential part of humanity, but something superinduced, added to human nature; it is a deformity and not of the essence of manhood. God has provided means for the destruction of this element of evil, for its expulsion from the sacred temple of humanity which it has polluted. Jesus Christ at the last will present to the Father his redeemed and sanctified ones without spot or wrinkle, all so pure as if they had never known sin. We can however conceive it possible on that day of acquittal that Satan may assume for the last time the character of the Accuser of the brethren and bring their transgressions to judgment. The language of Jeremiah may be fulfilled—On that day the iniquity of Israel and the sins of Judah shall be sought but shall not be found.

Why cannot they be found? All these holy ones have been transgressors, all, without exception have had their sins. Why then cannot those sins be found? Because they are not, they have ceased to be, there are none. What then has become of them? The pardoning God replies, "I have blotted out their transgressions as a cloud, and their iniquity as a thick cloud and will remember their sins against them no more for ever. All of them have availed themselves of the sacrifice which cleanseth from all sin, their sin is abolished, and therefore are they without fault in the presence of a witnessing universe and of God their King, their Lawgiver and their Judge."

PRAISE COMELY

Praise is comely for the upright.—PSALM xxxiii. 1.

TO understand the text in all its bearings, we must distinguish between gratitude and praise. Gratitude is an inward, loving sense of obligation for benefits received; praise is the expression or outward manifestation of that inward feeling. Gratitude is a thing of the heart; praise is a thing of the lip. Gratitude is a something felt; praise is a something expressed. The two are not identical; they may exist apart, the one without the other. You may feel gratitude without expressing it in words. The deepest gratitude is sometimes unuttered and unutterable. There are moments in the soul's history when the man spurns words as an utterly inadequate vehicle for conveying all the heart feels, when silence is the highest eloquence. On the other hand, there may be praise on the lips when there is no gratitude in the heart. The voice may pour forth strains of sweetest harmony, in language the most refined and exalted, when there is no corresponding sentiment in the heart.

Bearing in mind the fact, that praise may be expressed when there is no gratitude in the heart; that the song of thanksgiving may be on the lips when there is no thankfulness in the soul, we have a very solemn negative truth suggested by the text. While the words simply affirm that praise is comely to the upright, they also imply that praise is not comely to the wicked. There is something strange and startling in the idea. Our first feeling is, that, as all men are recipients of divine bounty, it is a becoming thing for all to praise the Giver; yet, the thought which the text suggests is that for ungodly men to praise God is unseemly.

Our subject therefore will have a negative and a positive aspect. We shall endeavour to show, that while praise is comely to the upright, that it is not comely to the wicked.

Let us glance at the blessings for which we are accustomed to praise God. As a matter of convenience, and for the sake of clearness, we may take the classification in the beautiful collect of thanksgiving, in the Liturgical Service:—Existence, Redemption and Immortality.

Praise is comely for EXISTENCE INCLUDING CREATION PRESERVATION AND THE BLESSINGS OF THIS LIFE. Praise for existence is not comely to all, only to the upright.

A song of thanksgiving for existence in the lips of the man who abuses life, and its attendant blessings, is not seemly. A pitiable object of want presents himself at your door appealing for help. Your sympathies are moved. In the kindness of your heart, you invite the suppliant into your house, to partake of your hospitality. Having had his wants generously supplied; he returns thanks with gushing ardour, and lavishes praise on your unmerited kindness. But during the hours of hospitable entertainment, he secretly acquires a knowledge of the fastenings, the bolts, and bars on which you depend for safety during the night; he ascertains the easiest access into the house, and where the plate and valuables are kept. Before the morning, he heads a gang of burglars to break into your house, to plunder you of property. When the criminal is discovered, what will you say of his gushing thanks the previous day? Can you commend them as comely, or will you denounce them as base and worthless? You must feel that he has wickedly abused your kindness and added hypocrisy to crime.

God has given you a being, placed you in a world thronged with tokens of his loving-kindness; He surrounds you daily with circumstances which contribute to your happiness, and crowns the whole of life with manifold mercies, and yet, if you abuse his kindness, pervert his gifts, employ them for evil

purposes, can praise be comely for blessings thus abused? What? Praise God for power to rebel against him? for opportunities to insult him? for gifts which are used only to serve divers lusts? No. Until you learn to appreciate the gifts, to employ them for their legitimate purpose, and for the glory of the Giver, the language of praise is not seemly.

A bad man sometimes thanks God that he is alive and out of hell. Is this comely? Think of this. Do not come to a hasty conclusion. To spare you despite multiplied transgressions is good and merciful, and an evidence of divine forbearance. The daily abuse of life and its blessings renders that forbearance all the more wonderful. If you persist in wrong-doing, that very forbearance becomes a curse instead of a blessing. On the supposition that you live for twenty years to come, and throughout those years continue in sin, and then at last die in sin, it would be better for you to die now, than twenty years hence, when the guilty accumulations of a prolonged sinful life must sink you into a deeper woe. While this lengthened life is used only to multiply sins, and to increase final condemnation, it is not for you to be thankful for life. Under such conditions, praise for spared life is not comely.

On the other hand, the good man recognises God

as the Dispenser of every blessing. He receives all gifts as of grace, and not of merit. He is only the steward; God is the supreme Proprietor. He holds all blessings as a loan or trust, and as a faithful steward, employs them for God, and not against God, in harmony with the will of the Giver and not for selfish purposes. As all the rivers return to the sea whence they came, so the upright man sends all God's gifts back again in grateful homage, and loving service to the Divine Source of all good. Gurnall speaks of "the double action of the lungs," sucking in the air, then breathing it forth, so prayer draws in the good things of God, and praise breathes them back in song into the bosom of God. When we employ for God, whatever His bounteous grace hath given, the praise is comely.

Praise is comely for REDEMPTION. Redemption is the highest expression of God's love to man; the means which Infinite Wisdom devised and adopted for our restoration to God and purity. Hence, we are accustomed to thank God for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. Without redemption, this world, if it existed at all, would be simply a world of retribution, a pandemonium, where strict unmixed justice would be dealt out to every transgressor; and

as all are transgressors, all would be enduring the full penalty of disobedience without mitigation or intermission. Without redemption, no look of kindness would brighten a single countenance, no word of tenderness would give music to a single voice, no loving sympathy would warm a single heart; but anger would furrow every brow, blasphemy pollute every lip, hatred rankle in every heart. The man who rejects this redemption cannot with any consistency praise God for it. How can he thank God for a salvation which he persistently spurns; for the blood of atonement, and yet trample it beneath his feet; for a Divine Saviour and yet crucify Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame? Better not praise Him at all, than praise Him insincerely. Silence would be less offensive, than the praise of hypocrisy.

There is another thought which must not be overlooked. Redemption increases our responsibility. We cannot occupy a neutral relation to it. It must be a blessing or a curse; it must be the savour of death or the savour of life. Embrace it, and it blesses you; reject it, and it condemns you. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (John iii. 19). Finally rejected, redemption instead of benefiting you, will bring you under a heavier judgment; instead of exalting you,

it must sink you into a deeper woe. The word is gone forth, that the Name of Jesus shall be for the fall of many, as well as for the rising of many. Unless you build on Him as your Foundation, He, as the rejected Corner Stone, must fall on you, and grind you to powder. Viewed from this standpoint, it is better not to be redeemed than have redemption only to be rejected. While redemption will for ever vindicate God's character as a God of love, and demand the highest noblest praise of all redeemed creatures, yet, it is a good for which you cannot praise God while rejecting its provisions. The rejection of redemption disqualifies a man for thanking God for the greatest display of love the universe ever beheld.

The first duty required from us is, that we accept the proferred salvation, and rest by faith on the one only Saviour; then under the influence of our newborn joys, we may pour forth strains of praise, and feel, while all the holy universe feels with us, that such praise is comely.

This is what all saved men have done. They have submitted to the conditions of redemption, accepted its blessings, and are endeavouring humbly to achieve its lofty purposes. They have not only read and heard of God's unspeakable gift, but have, by faith become its happy conscious recipients. Once they were children of wrath even as others,

but God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith He loved them, even when they were dead in sins, hath quickened them together, and made them sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The contrast between their former state of sin and their present state of salvation, between their former wretchedness and their present blessedness, fills them with ecstasy, and extorts from their inmost souls the anthem,—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Praise is comely for the gift of IMMORTALITY. Man is destined to live for ever. Deathlessness is an attribute of souls. God has ordained, that the eternal future may be one of blessedness to all. Through Christ, this is gloriously possible to every one of us. Hence, we are accustomed to thank God for the means of grace, and the hope of glory. Here then is an attribute which allies us to God, and invests us with greatness and grandeur, and yet, it is one for which the wicked cannot with any consistency praise God. He who lives in sin is crowding that future with darkness, woe, and despair; he is storing up thunderbolts of retribution to smite his ruined nature. For him there is nothing in that future but a certain fearful looking for of judgment

and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. It is not for such a man to exult in his immortality, or to praise God for having made him deathless. Endless night, eternal unconsciousness, or nothingness, would be infinitely preferable to an immortality of woe.

But the upright man can, and ought to praise God for his immortality. He may exult in his manhood, in his superiority to the vegetable and the animal. He may be glad, and thankful that he is what he is. He has no reason for desiring to be anything else than immortal. Possessing the confident hope of a better life, of a future thronged with glory and blessedness, annihilation would be to him a terror, a calamity, a curse. He has something great and noble to live for, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory to anticipate. In prospect, he has that which will fill the immensity of his being, satisfy to the full and for ever, the yearning of his great nature, so that the very thought of his immortality fills his soul with ecstasy, and his song with harmony (1 Peter i. 3).

> O what a blessed hope is ours!
> While here on earth we stay,
> We more than taste the heavenly powers,
> And antedate that day.

Let us for a moment cross the threshold, pass within the veil, and in thought, enter the future

world, and see how this truth bears on the inhabitants of eternity.

In eternity *the lost cannot praise God for existence.* Looking back on their earthly life, they see little or nothing on which they can congratulate themselves, but much, if not every thing, to regret. Mercies there have been many, but they have been abused; moral agencies working for their salvation have been manifold and mighty, but they have been resisted; so that instead of thanking God for them, they now feel, that it would be better if life had been shorter, and their mercies fewer. Conscious, that, through their own folly and perverseness, prolonged life and multiplied privileges, have served only to bring upon them a deeper condemnation, they must feel that an earlier grave would have been better, and an earlier retribution more tolerable. Instead of thanking God for their earthly life, with all its attendant blessings, it would be more in harmony with every feeling in their nature, to adopt the language of Job—"Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?"

But the saints glorified will look back on their earthly life with thankfulness. Whatever of unfaithfulnes or of sin, there may have been, it will be remembered only as pardoned sin. If sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. If

there has been much to regret, there has been much more to rejoice in. There will be a remembrance of sin in heaven; the song of redemption will perpetuate that memory, but it will be the remembrance of sin blotted out, cancelled for ever, by the mercy of God through the atonement. The remembrance of the magnitude of the sin will magnify the mercy that pardoned it, and give ardour and intensity to the anthem,—"Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

The lost cannot praise God for Redemption. Looking back upon the history of the Cross, with all its marvels, and all its love, they cannot thank God for it. The consciousness that they might have been saved instead of lost, that they might have been in heaven instead of hell; that this reversal of destiny is owing to their own persistent folly;—this is the most tormenting and crushing of all their thoughts. Under the agony of this bitter reflection, so far from praising God for redeeming them, they may curse that very redemption, and wish, that they had been permitted to share the doom of fallen angels, to live and die without the intervention of the incarnation and crucifixion. To know and feel that they were redeemed, that the price of their ransom was nothing

less than the precious blood of the Incarnate Son of God, and at the same time to feel, that they have perished through rejecting this great provision; this is the mightiest element in their woe, and will incapacitate them for ever, for giving thanks to the Father for the greatest Gift of His Love.

But the saints glorified will praise God for ever for redemption, and their praise is comely. They are reaping the full, the richer benefits of redemption. They can now estimate as they never could on earth, the enormity of the evil from which they have been delivered, and the greatness of the good they have attained. Looking beneath, and fathoming the depth of woe which they have deserved, but from which they have been rescued; looking around them at the glories they have reached, and then looking forward and upward to the still greater glories which challenge their ambition, they cannot but feel, the holy universe must feel with them, that praise to them is comely, and that it would be passing strange, if there did not burst forth from both lip and heart, the exulting strain of grateful adoring love, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing."

The lost cannot praise God for their Immortality. They were men, not only possessed of reason, but

capable of heaven in common with the glorified, and yet, to-day they curse their manhood, their immortality, wish themselves anything but men, yea brutes, stones, anything rather than the tremendous consciousness of greatness crushed, noble aspirations stifled, the divinity driven out of the soul; its avenues of joy converted into avenues of woe; God's order reversed; the animal and carnal usurping authority over reason, intellect, and conscience. From their dark abode, looking up to heaven, they see in the history of other spirits what they might have been, and envy but in vain, that nobler destiny, then looking at what they are, wretched outcasts, they curse the folly which depraved all that was noble, and blasted all that was divine in their nature.

Suppose a messenger from some foreign realm appeared in the world of retribution, taking his stand in some central position, and gathering around him all the human spirits in the world of woe, he then makes the proclamation,—I am authorised to submit two proposals to your choice :—annihilation, or endless existence; unconsciousness for ever, or your present life for ever; which will you choose? Without a moment's hesitation, they would one and all choose annihilation, they would welcome it as a boon infinitely preferable to endless wretchedness, and the messenger they would hail as a benefactor, who had come to relieve the miseries of their despair.

Let that messenger take wing, and soar from hell to heaven, let him submit the same proposal to the saints around the throne; let him put the question to them—Which do you prefer, annihilation or endless life; unconsciousness for ever, or your present condition for ever? What would be their reply? They would regard the proposal as an insult, and a wrong; and the messenger a base intruder, come only to mock their highest hopes, and purest joys; or instead of condescending to give him an answer, they would with holy indignation unite to expel him from their blissful home; then, when banished, they would seize afresh their golden harps, and with greater zest than ever, praise God for life, life immortal as his own.

1. Worship to be acceptable must proceed from the *heart.* The ancient Egyptians presented to their gods as the choicest fruit the Peach. This was selected because of its symbolic signification. The peach itself in shape is like man's heart, and the leaf like man's tongue. By this offering, the worshipper acknowledged his god's claim to the service of the heart, as well as of the voice. He that praises God with his lips, while the heart is not in the service, is, like the fig tree in the gospel, full of leaves, but destitute of fruit, and nigh unto cursing. The singing of the birds, the croaking of the raven, or the screeching of the night-bird, is more acceptable to

God than our most exquisite psalm singing, if there be no heart and no understanding in it. "Music is the soul in motion." The soul expresses its sentiment in song, or in symbol, but it is the inward gratitude that God appreciates, and accepts, and not the symbol. In our solemn assemblies, bad men bend their knees in prayer, sing our hymns, and seem devout after a fashion. They cry, Have mercy upon us miserable sinners; they are conscious of having sinned the past week, and they have no serious purpose to cease from sin the next week. Will the Lord hear them? No. Their prayer is an abomination. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

Long after the life of godliness had died out of the soul, God's ancient people retained the form of worship. The ceremonies, offerings, oblations were strictly attended to according to the divinely appointed ritual. Externally, the worship was faultless; but to God, it was an abomination. Mark what He saith about it. "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol" (Isaiah lxvi. 3). In this passage, we have four points of contrast between the Jewish offerings and heathen sacrifices. To kill an ox, to sacrifice a lamb, to offer an oblation, to burn incense, were all of divine appointment under the

Mosaic ritual, and the people continued diligently to observe these rites; whereas to offer a human being in sacrifice, to cut off a dog's head, to offer swine's blood, to bless an idol were heathen practices, most hateful to God, and distinctly prohibited. So that God's people when performing rites which God had enjoined, because they performed them unworthily, heartlessly, insincerely, were as offensive to God, as the very heathen in their bloody and most hateful rites. In stern language God reproves his people. "Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations: they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not" (Isaiah lxvi. 3, 4). The feast of tabernacles was the grand festival of harvest and thanksgiving, and the last festival of the year. It was distinguished as a season of joy, praise and thanksgiving. But *five* days previous to this, was the great day of atonement, when the people had to afflict their souls with sorrow, and be reconciled to God by an elaborate sacrificial ritual, and so teaching, that only a people at peace with God might rejoice before him, and give thanks for the blessings with which He had crowned the year. In some of the sacrifices under the law, the Mosaic ritual required the inwards of the animal to be offered to God, but the skin, the outer covering to the priest. A bended knee, a craving eye, fine melodious strains are appropriate things for the

worshipper to bring to God, but without the devotion of the heart, they are nothing but hypocrisy and a sham. "Hannah spake in her heart, only her lips moved, her voice was not heard" (1 Sam. i. 13). "Yet, (saith Richard Steele) this voiceless prayer did the business. Lip labour is lost labour."

When we joined in singing the exalted strains of the opening hymn, suppose that the Searcher of Hearts had come, and spirited away every person whose heart was not engaged, and that none were left, but those whose hearts truly adored; what a thinning of the assembly! How many would depart, how few left to worship God in spirit and in truth! How many of us think more of the music than of the words, more of the harmony than of the thoughts, more of the sound than of the sentiment? And when after crossing the threshold of this holy place on your homeward way, how many of you remember the tunes but forget the hymns sung! You have a distinct recollection of the melody, but no idea of the words and thoughts you expressed in the presence of the Lord. The Lord our God has a book of remembrance for those who *think* upon His Name, while He turns a deaf ear to those who cry Lord, Lord, but who do not inwardly adore. They that appeared before the Lord without a sacrifice are said to appear empty. Whatever else you bring to the Lord, if you do not bring your heart, to His eye, you appear

empty (Deut. xvi. 16). Praise, to be acceptable, must be baptized, saturated with the subtle fragrance of the soul. They that worship, must worship in spirit and in truth. You may peal forth your noblest strains from the organ, but these alone never reach the ear of Heaven. Until you play on the inner organ of the spirit there is no music in God's ear.

Ancient history tells us of a holy man who had a vision. In the temple, he saw an angel at the elbow of every man engaged in prayer. He that prayed with *malice* in his heart, his angel wrote his petitions in *gall*: he that prayed *coldly*, his petitions were written in *water*: he that prayed with distractions, his petitions were written in *sand*: and his petitions who prayed in *faith* were written in letters of gold. The seraphic Ezekiel was brought in a vision to the door of the temple, and God revealed to him the abominations carried on in the Lord's house, and among others, was one of about five and twenty men, between the porch and the altar, turning their faces towards the sun, and their backs on God (Ezek. viii. 16). This abomination is repeated by men whose hearts wander from God while in the sanctuary; their backs towards God, their faces towards things under the sun.

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not depreciate music, the harmonious strains of our holy songs. God demands the service of the voice. Hosea

teaches us to bring to God "the calves of our lips," or as interpreted by St. Paul, "the fruit of our lips." The Jew presented animals and fruit as thankofferings; we are called to give not the calves from the stalls, but the calves of our lips; not the fruit of the soil, but the fruit of the lips. Bring the very best of every thing to God; your noblest strains, your sweetest harmony, the most exalted language, the sublimest poetry, but with all this, do not fail to bring your hearts, as St. Paul says, singing with grace in your hearts or making melody in your hearts unto the Lord. "This is the best tune to any Psalm," says Trapp. The Psalmist calls his tongue his "glory," as if not satisfied with praising God with his glory, and assured that this alone would not be acceptable, he adds the high resolve "I will praise thee with all my heart" (Ps. lxxxvi. 12).

2. As an evidence of gratitude God demands our *obedience.* We are to praise him in our lives. God does not will to be adored without being obeyed. He gave a prohibition to man in his innocence, thereby intimating that He would not accept of Adam's worship unless he also obeyed. The noblest anthem is the anthem of a holy life. The anthem of the lips is mockery, a mere empty sound, if the life do not give out a corresponding harmony. God demands that we live our thanks, as well as speak or sing them. Praising God is not a seemly work

for the man whose ways are crooked and habits perverse. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. xxviii. 9). "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" After questioning himself what would be the best return he could give to his divine Benefactor, the Psalmist resolved on two things. "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." In allusion to the Jewish offerer, who, after the lamb sacrifice took a cup full of wine, lifting it up on high, he poured it forth as a drink offering before the Lord. In addition to this outpouring of gratitude, the Psalmist adds—"I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people." What vows? The vow is in verse 9. "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." So must we pour out from a full heart the wine of gratitude as a holy libation before the Lord, and then go forth to live that gratitude, by walking well pleasing before the Lord in the land of the living.

1. My soul, through my Redeemer's care,
   Saved from the second death I feel,
   My eyes from tears of dark despair,
   My feet from falling into hell.

2. Wherefore to him my feet shall run,
   My eyes on his perfections gaze,
   My soul shall live for God alone,
   And all within me shout his praise.

Three words are found in both these verses—"feet," "eyes," "soul." In the first verse you thank God for keeping your feet from falling into hell. What will you do with the feet thus mercifully saved from the pit? The second verse answers

> Wherefore to him my feet shall run.

In the first verse, you praise God for saving your eyes from tears of dark despair. What will you do with eyes so graciously spared? Wherefore shall

> My eyes on his perfections gaze.

In the first verse, you praise the Redeemer for saving your soul from the second death. What will you do with that soul, so marvellously saved? Wherefore

> My soul shall live for God alone,
> And all within me shout his praise.

It is said that when Mendelssohn went to see the great Freiburg organ, and asked permission of the old custodian to be allowed to play upon it, that he was refused. After a little kind persuasion, however, consent was reluctantly given. Mendelssohn instantly took his seat, and made the organ discourse sublimest music. The custodian spellbound drew near and ventured to ask for the name of the stranger. When it was announced, ashamed, humbled and self-condemned, the custodian exclaimed, What

a fool am I to refuse you permission to play! There is One standing by you who can bring forth the most heavenly strains of music from your heart. Place it in his hand and Christ who hath redeemed you will make every chord send forth celestial harmonies that would make all the angels cease to sing and be mute, that they might the better listen to the nobler music of Christ's redeemed ones.

MY FATHER'S BUSINESS

How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?—LUKE ii. 49.

THESE are the first recorded words of the Redeemer on earth, and he was twelve years old when He uttered them. For eighteen long years after this, we have no scripture record of a word he uttered, or of an act he did. Doubtless, he spake many words, and performed many acts, during the thirty years of his earthly life. The gospel of the childhood, and other books have given us many stories, but they are all mythical, and destitute of authority, many of them foolish and improbable. We have no scriptural authentic record of a single word spoken by Jesus Christ, beside our text, up to the age of thirty. This fact invests the passage with profound significance and special importance.

In these words, we have the keynote to the whole future life of our Lord both on earth and in heaven. The entire purpose of our Lord's Incarnation is summed up in the three words—"My Father's business." I know that it is impossible for

me, or for any one, to exhaust the eternal fulness of meaning in these memorable words of the Holy Child. They are inexhaustible, and will be for ever, inexhaustible in heaven, as well as on earth. Holy minds in eternity will for ever be employed in solving the deep, unfathomable mysteries of the wonderful phrase of the Divine Child, "My Father's business." This *was* the sole business of Christ from the incarnation in Bethlehem to his crucifixion, and from his death on the cross to his ascension into heaven; this *is* his sole business, from his session at the right hand of the Majesty to his coming again to judge the world; this *will be* his business from the final judgment throughout the future ages of eternity. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed his redeemed, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water.

I. In his first words, JESUS CLAIMS DIVINE PATERNITY, AND FOR HIMSELF DIVINE SONSHIP. When his mother said, "*Thy father* and I have sought thee," she meant Joseph, but when Jesus said, "*My* Father's business," He did not mean Joseph, for he was not about Joseph's business when in the temple, questioning, and being questioned by the doctors. We can put no other fair interpretation on the phrase "*My* Father" than that which makes it refer to God, His Divine Father. It was *His*

business that He was about when in the temple, not Joseph's.

Christ's first saying was not a moral precept, but a solemn declaration concerning his relation to God. He breaks forth on the world at the age of twelve, and claims to be the Son of the Eternal Father. Was it now that the consciousness of this great fact dawned upon him, or was it present with him during the whole of his early childhood in Nazareth? The confident calmness with which he utters it suggests that he was previously conscious of the relationship. As a Jewish boy, brought up in a devout religious home, he must have been early instructed in the law and the prophets. Before he was born, his mother was visited by an angel, who communicated to her a divine message of marvellous significance. "Fear not Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus." Would not his mother tell him before he reached the age of twelve, of this angelic visit, and of the mysterious message? Could she, as a fond mother, well withhold it? While studying the law and the prophets, during the early years of childhood in Nazareth, his eye may have fallen on Isaiah's significant passage, "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Would he not at once interpret the

meaning, and applying it to Himself, understand that He was the Immanuel to be begotten of a virgin? Had he read, or had there been read to him, in the secluded home of Nazareth, the passage in Deut. xviii. 18, 19. "I will raise them a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." Had he a glimpse of himself when the passage was read? In the temple, what portions of the Hebrew Scriptures were read in the services of his first passover, and what portions were discussed by the Wise Men after the service? Was it Isaiah liii., or Psalm ii., or Psalm xxii., or Psalm lxxii., or Psalm cx.? Were these included in the seven days' service, or in the discussion among the doctors? Did the child of twelve years hear any inward voice, saying, I am He of whom Psalmists and Prophets speak? Was the grandeur of his mission opening out to Him? Was the spirit of his mission possessing Him? Did He now say to himself in the mysterious depth of his own consciousness,—"For this cause came I unto this hour, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" When now, He made the great announcement to his mother, that God is his Father and that He is the Son of God, did He not set his seal to the angel's mysterious words "He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest"?

From this moment, He renounces the idea that Joseph is his father. He seems to say to his mother—Thy husband is not my father. My Father sought me not, for I am always with my Father, and He is ever with me. From this moment Joseph disappears from the gospel, and his name is mentioned no more. We are doing no violence to the Scriptures, when we assert, that the phrase—"My Father"—refers exclusively to the Divine Fatherhood and the Divine Sonship. Jesus ~~Christ~~ never speaks of his holding the same relationship to God the Father as his disciples. He never speaks to his disciples of *our* God, or of *our* Father, but, of *your* Father, and *my* Father; of *your* God, and *my* God; implying, that his relationship as Son is of a higher, diviner order, than the relationship of the disciples as children of God. You may reply, that in the Lord's Prayer He says "Our Father." Yes, but He had said before, When YE pray say ye, Our Father. He puts the words into the mouths of his disciples, and does not intimate that he uses them himself when he prays, or that he uses them conjointly with his disciples. Although known as the Lord's Prayer, it is a prayer which He could not offer. It contains a petition for forgiveness of sins, which only sinners could offer, and He, being sinless, could not join in the petition.

Here then, we have Jesus Christ standing forth,

at the age of twelve, in the first word He is ever reported to have uttered, revealing his conscious Divinity, and asserting Himself to be the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father.

II. His Divine Mission. "My Father's business." What is this business? In one word it is *Redemption*, to bring lost humanity into a salvable condition; to provide for the restoration of purity, blessedness, and immortality, to men who have forfeited all by transgression; to save from sin, its power, pollution, and penalties, all who apply to God for mercy. Or, in other words, To establish in this fallen world, a kingdom of grace and salvation, whose gates shall be thrown wide open, and into which all the alienated race of man may enter, on condition of renouncing for ever their allegiance to the Evil One, and consecrating themselves loyally to their Redeeming King.

To qualify Himself for the task, the first essential is, that he become man, for only in the possession of human nature can He accomplish the work. He must die. He cannot die as God. He must assume a nature that can die. If He had taken upon himself the angelic nature, we do not see how He could die as an angel, he certainly could not die for me, or for you. He must assume our nature in order to die for us men. It behoved him to be made like

unto his brethren. He was made a little lower than the angels, that is, he was made man, for the suffering of death, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man (Heb. ii. 10–18). But what has this visit to the temple, when only twelve years of age, to do with this great business of redemption? Much in every way. If there had dawned on him the consciousness that He was the Son of God, that He had come into the world to fulfil the divine counsels, and to redeem humanity; this great Passover feast would have a deep solemn meaning to him, which it could not have to any ordinary Jewish youth of twelve, and which it could not have to the venerable and devout Jew, nor yet to the most holy of the officiating priests, not even the High Priest. With the consciousness of his Messiahship born within him, with what holy delight would he spend the seven days of the feast; with what profound interest and solemn awe, would he gaze on the grand ritual, the suggestive ceremonials, the prophetic sacrifices, and the typical blood-shedding! Every rite spoke a divine language to his heart, and suggested a divine thought to his mind. He would interpret every ceremonial in a way which no one else could. Every typical act of the priesthood on that solemn occasion, would have to find its fulfilment in due time in his own Person. Twenty-one years from this Passover, He himself

must be the slain Lamb, His must be the blood shed. These shadowy typical ceremonials will then be abolished, and cease for ever; for He himself will become the one Priest, the one Sacrifice, the one Mediator at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavenly sanctuary. It is said that He increased in wisdom. During these seven days of the Passover, He must have added immensely to his store of knowledge concerning the work he had to do, and the sacrifice he had to make, as the world's Redeemer. That Passover was an object-lesson, whose typical meaning He would not fail to understand and to apply.

The feast over, he returned with Joseph and Mary to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. For the next eighteen years of his life in Nazareth, we have no Scripture record of a word he said, or an act he did. Often, and with earnestness, have we wished that we had a record of some word he uttered, and of some act he did from twelve to thirty years of age. It hath pleased God however to throw a veil of mystery over that silent period of more than half his life on earth. We may be assured that it was a season of preparation, and that he was about his Father's business. There are some things, which, as a Jewish youth, he must have done. He must have studied the Law and the Prophets. During the three years of his public life, few things

astonished his enemies more than his perfect knowledge of the Old Testament Scripture. The aptitude and force of his quotations confused and confounded his disputants. When did he acquire this perfect knowledge of the Scriptures? It must have been during the eighteen years of mysterious silence in Nazareth. Enter a Jewish Synagogue on their Sabbath, or on any of their festivals, and you will find that Jewish youths of twelve and upwards are employed in reading from the desk extensive portions out of the Law and the Prophets. This was the custom in the service of the Synagogue in the days of Christ. It is not likely that Joseph and Mary had in their home a copy of the Scripture, for it would be too costly a treasure for them in their poverty to possess. But Jesus would have access to the copy in the Synagogue, and would doubtless, like other Jewish youths, be called upon to read portions in the service, as well as to take part in the chanting of the Psalms. This gave him the opportunity of familiarising himself with the Holy Scriptures, and we may be assured that the opportunity was not lost or neglected. He emerged from that solitude better equipped by the discipline, for the solemn responsibilities of the future. Armed with the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, he came forth and triumphantly combated both men and demons. Whatever else he may have done, it

was his Divine Father's business that chiefly occupied him during that long Nazareth silence.

After this, we next meet him at the age of thirty, coming to John for baptism. "But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" To which Jesus replied, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." This was his *second* word, and it is only the *echo* of his first. "I must be about my Father's business" was the first, and the second was like unto it—"It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

The baptism of John was the baptism of repentance, and all, who came to him for baptism, confessed their sins before descending into the river. Jesus presented himself like any other Israelite. What need of Jesus to submit to this baptism? He had no sins of his own to confess. If there be a human feeling alien to the heart of Jesus, it is that of penitence. Why then should he come to the baptism of repentance? If he had no sins of his own to confess, yet, he had sins pressing as an awful burden upon him, even the sin of the world, which he had voluntarily assumed, for he is called the Sin-Bearer. This is the reason why John said of him as he came to the baptism, "Behold the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world." There is nothing unreasonable, nothing inconsistent with

his absolute purity in the supposition, that he did make confession of the sins which he had taken upon himself as our Representative and Substitute. Isaiah, Daniel, Nehemiah confessed the sins of the nation which pressed upon them as a burden, so Jesus confessed the sin of the world, which he had volunteered to take upon himself, with this difference: the best of the prophets, when confessing the sins of the people, had the consciousness of a personal share in their guilt; but Jesus had no such consciousness, and could not have. He was without sin, and yet was made sin for us. This was the reason, when he came to the baptism of repentance, with the sin of the world upon him, that he said to John, "Suffer it to be so now for it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It was his Father's business.

At his baptism He *prayed*. We have no record of Jesus Christ praying until he was thirty years old. Doubtless he did pray, but we have no Scripture record of it. When at his baptism he prayed, What was his request? For whom did he pray? For Himself, or for the world? Why not for both? He was just entering on his public life, and openly beginning his divine mission. He would surely pray for Himself, that every needed qualification for his great work might be bestowed upon him; and He would also pray for the human race, that they might be led to avail themselves of the great

redemption, which his merciful intervention would provide. This we know, that while his eyes were lifted up to heaven in an expectant attitude, the answer came; the Holy Spirit descended, and rested upon him, consecrating him there and then for his work, and giving him a pledge that his work should not be in vain. It was his Father's business.

During the three years of his public life, from his baptism to his death, we have in the Gospels a copious record of his words and works; of his miracles and prayers; of his calling and training of the twelve for the founding of his kingdom. In the midst of his holy activities, he uttered the great declaration, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." In every step he took, in every word he uttered, in every act he performed, this spirit of entire consecration to the will of his Father possessed him and inspired him. If at times, when his enemies conspired to kill him, he escaped to avoid their murderous plots, it was not that he timidly shrank from suffering and death, but because his hour had not yet come. To have submitted to die earlier, or in any other way than by crucifixion, would have been to leave the Father's work unfinished, purposes unaccomplished, prophecies unfulfilled. He must reach the Cross *when* he did, and *how* he did, or he could not at the close have uttered the triumphant word—"It is finished." If, when a

boy of twelve, he could say to Joseph and Mary, and through them to the world of men, "I must be about my Father's business;" he could, at the very close of life, turn to his Divine Father and say "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John xvii. 4, 5).

III. CHRIST'S COMPLETE SELF-SURRENDER, HIS ABSOLUTE DEVOTION TO THIS GREAT BUSINESS of redeeming the lost race, is expressed and emphasised in this word,—"MUST."

This great word, *must*, is used about thirty times in the New Testament in relation to the Mission of Christ, his work, his sufferings, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his Mediatorial Sovereignty, and his final victory over sin and Satan, and mostly the word proceeds from the lips of Christ himself; in a few instances, it also proceeds from the sacred writers themselves; but even then, they seem only to echo the word which he had so solemnly used, and which, by frequent repetition, he had deeply impressed on their memory. For example take the following—He showed "unto his disciples how that he *must* go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things." "The Scripture *must* be fulfilled." "The Son of Man

must suffer many things." "I *must* preach the kingdom of God." "I *must* walk to-day and to-morrow and the day following." "But first *must* he suffer many things and be rejected of this generation." "The Passover *must* be killed." "This that is written *must* yet be accomplished in me, and he was reckoned among the transgressors." "The Son of Man *must* be delivered." "All things *must* be fulfilled." "Even so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up." "He *must* rise again." "He *must* reign." Sometimes, under the pressure of this awful "must," although the word itself is not used, yet, he employs phrases that are equivalent, and that indicate he is under solemn necessity. "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." The word "must" is not there, but the meaning of it is, and the solemn pressure of it is felt. "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour." The word "must" is not again in this passage, but we hear the echo of it, feel the pressure of it, and the meaning of it is significantly emphasised.

In fulfilment of this unbending "must," he submitted to the *ceremonial law* by appearing in Jerusalem on the great feast solemnities. He obeyed the *moral* law—He loved God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself. He undertook

to obey another law, *the law of redemption;* and to redeem humanity, he must endure the curse of the law. He must assume our nature, and in that nature he must die, in order to finish the work the Father hath given him to do.

But WHY "MUST"?

1. Because of *the covenant he made of old with the Father.* In the New Testament three things are said to have been done *before* the foundation of the world, and all three have to do immediately with some aspect of the great redemption. Christ mentions one, Peter another, and Paul a third. Jesus Christ, speaking directly to his Divine Father, says, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Peter again, referring to the Father fore-ordaining Jesus Christ to his office says, "Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest in these last times for you." Paul again, speaking of choosing or electing to salvation all that are in Christ says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Here then you have the Father in love ordaining the Son to the high office of redeeming the lost race of man; you have the Son accepting the responsibility, and the Father loving the Son with a special love for covenanting with the Father to fulfil the Mission; and then thirdly, you

have the Father covenanting with the Son that he shall not die in vain, but that multitudes of sinners should be saved through him, and be made holy and without blame before him in love. This covenant was confirmed when the Father said to the now consecrated anointed Son, "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." And again, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." When was this covenant made? Not when Christ ascended to heaven, not when the Psalms were written, but before the foundation of the world, before sin entered, before man was created, before the first foundation of the material universe was laid. To this covenant, made in the eternal past between the Father and the Son, the prophet (Zech. vi. 13) refers when he speaks of a covenant of peace between them both. Malachi also gives to Christ the title "the Messenger of the Covenant." When the fulness of the time was come the Incarnate One appears as the Messenger of the Covenant and publicly and distinctly announces his Mission. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of

him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 38–40).

When man sinned God was not startled by a sudden surprise; He had not hastily to provide a remedy for an unexpected outbreak of evil. The divine purpose anticipated the human failure. God foresaw the entrance of sin, and provided the remedy before the disease had seized humanity. The gospel of redemption was in the divine mind long before man needed it, and long before man was created. The Redeemer was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world; and the Father was ready to proclaim him, and did proclaim him, the moment that evil triumphed. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." This is the work which the Father gave him to do, and this is the work which the Son covenanted to do, and under the awful pressure of this solemn covenant engagement he proclaims to the world as his opening message, I must be about my Father's business.

Why "Must"?

2. He must *because no other being in earth or heaven could do the business.* In the far unfathomable past, I hear the question asked by the Father, Whom shall I send and who will go for us?

conceive the divine Father searching the universe, sending his voice throughout the habitations of immensity, inquiring for an agent to whom he can entrust the business of redeeming the lost race. Who will go for us? The question circulates among the sons of the mighty in distant realms, but no one answers; the voice falls on the principalities, thrones, powers, dominions in the heavenlies, but there is no response; the appeal penetrates the suns and systems in space, but the inhabitants do not answer; all shrink back into an awful silence as if conscious of incompetency. Throughout the immensity of created beings no one could be found with strength enough, with wisdom enough, with love enough to undertake the responsibility. It was not until He turned to his Other Self, His Only-Begotten, that he had a response. The Eternal Son alone breaks the universal silence—"Behold, here am I, send me." He had no competitor, no equal. The Father hearing this announcement of the Son's willingness, and knowing his competency, accepts the offer with love and joy. Then when equipped with human nature and fitted for the office, the Son said, "A body hast thou prepared for me. Lo I come to do thy will O my God, thy law is within my heart."

3. "*I must*" *or man must perish under the curse of sin.* Christ was under no law of force, of sovereign, absolute necessity to interpose and die.

It was simply the law of love, of compassion infinite. He saw you doomed to perish and his whole nature was moved to its infinite depths. As if he could not endure the thought of your coming under the curse, he stepped into the breach, challenged the suspended sword to smite him and let the guilty go free. He seemed to say, Let the floodgates be uplifted and the displeasure of violated law come upon me, that man may find shelter under the shadow of my Cross. The Passover must be killed. If I die not, man must die eternally. If at any stage of my redeeming career I pause, or fail to pass through the ordeal of death, of the grave, into the resurrection of life, and then into the Mediatorial throne to be Priest King for ever, then, humanity must remain under sin for ever, the penalty of sin must crush body and soul for ever, heaven must be barred for ever against the human race; hell must move from beneath to meet and receive the sinning race into its devouring abyss.

Subtle deceitful efforts were made to deter him, and to turn him aside from his purpose. In the wilderness, when alone, Satan made a personal onslaught upon him, and with malignant subtlety endeavoured thrice to dissuade him from his redeeming purpose; but strong in his love to you and me, he sternly reproved the tempter—Get thee behind me Satan, stand out of my way, hinder me not in

my pathway to the Cross; for to agony and death I mean to go in order to redeem the race which thou hast enslaved. Once again, when Jesus had showed his disciples how that he *must* go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, etc., Peter, lending himself to become the agent of Satan, dared to rebuke the Master saying, "Be it far from thee Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Turning sharply on Peter, the Master rebuked him as he had rebuked the tempter in the wilderness:—Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God but those that be of men. Thou art to me a stumbling-block, a stone of stumbling lying right across my path. O Peter, wouldst thou have me to stumble and to fall, and so fail to reach the goal and to fufil my mission? But neither Satan nor Peter, nor both united, could induce him to swerve from his purpose of love. In the strength of his infinite compassion he held on his way, and never faltered until the Cross was reached, Satan conquered, man redeemed, and the great word escaped his sacred lips, "It is finished."

Now that the business is completed on the Divine side, now that the awful "must" so often on his lips has been fulfilled to the uttermost, there remains something for you to do on the human side. The benefits of his redemption are conditioned. There is an absolute "must" resting on you as a solemn

responsibility. In order to reap the full saving benefit of his merciful intervention, you *must* accept him, you *must* believe on him, you *must* love him, and in his own emphatic words, You *must* be born again, or you must perish, and know the awful mystery of "the wrath of the Lamb." "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." You must build all your hopes on him as the only sure foundation, or He, as the rejected Corner Stone, must fall on you and grind you to powder.

DECAYING LOVE

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.—Rev. ii. 4.

THE Church at Ephesus was favoured with apostolic letters from two different apostles, the one from Paul, the other from John. We know of no other Church that was so favoured. The Ephesian Epistles were written under similar conditions. Both the apostles when writing were under persecution on account of the gospel. Paul was the prisoner of Jesus Christ in Rome; John was in banishment in Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Both Paul and John were allied to the Ephesian Church by strong and endearing ties. Paul planted the Church, and many of the members were his converts; John spent the closing years of his life in nourishing that Church with his gentle ministry of love.

We propose now to direct our thoughts to St. John's letter to the Ephesians.

I. THE LETTER although written by John, WAS DICTATED BY THE LORD JESUS HIMSELF. The letters

to the seven churches in Asia are invested with special solemnity and importance, by the fact that they were dictated by the risen, exalted and enthroned Christ. The voice which speaks to the Ephesian saints in this letter, is not the voice of any earth-born man, but the voice of the Lord from heaven. The words are not the words of John, but of the Divine Master, the Conqueror of death and hell; who was dead, but who hath ascended on high, and is alive for evermore.

When writing our letters we reserve our signature for the close; Jesus Christ begins his letters by first announcing his Name. In each of these seven letters, he assumes a different title; and in all of them, he reveals himself under names and titles which can apply to no other being whatsoever. To Ephesus he announces himself as "He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." There can be no question as to the symbolic meaning of the stars; our Lord himself interprets the symbolism. The seven stars are the angels or messengers of the seven churches (i. 20). The ministers of the gospel are called stars to indicate that their light is not self-derived, that they shine with a borrowed brightness. A solemn truth is here taught us ministers and you teachers,—we must be illumined ourselves by Him who is the Light, before we become the qualified

medium of light to others. We must be made light in the Lord, before we can go forth in his Name to shed light on a dark world. If in darkness ourselves we cannot say to others 'Come,' for that would be an invitation to walk in darkness; it would be the blind leading the blind. Jesus Christ gave the bread to the disciples first; and after that, the disciples to the multitude. If we have not tasted of the bread of life ourselves, we are not in a condition to commend it or to distribute it among others.

The seven stars are 'in his right hand.' The right hand of God is a symbol of power, authority, and indicates that He claims the right to appoint their station, and to control their movements. "In the midst," not only to watch their doings, but as a guarantee of guidance, of safety, and as a pledge of success if faithful to their trust. "Lo I am with you alway." "Walking," not an inactive unconcerned spectator, but moving about as if to see where there is weakness that needs strengthening, dulness that needs illuminating, timidity that needs encouraging, dying embers that need stirring and fanning into fresh flame.

II. Having introduced Himself by these divine Names and titles, JESUS CHRIST NOW COMMENDS THE EXCELLENCES OF THE EPHESIAN CHURCH.

"I know thy works." This phrase is found in all

the seven letters, and proclaims the solemn truth, that all actions and all thoughts are open to Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire. The Omniscient, the All-knowing dictates every word in this epistle, there can be no disputing of his statements, no appeal against his judgment. "The veneer of a formal profession may impose on men, but his scrutiny pierces through and beneath. He knows and lovingly accepts unmarked and unrequited acts of true love. He appreciates, notwithstanding all its failures, genuine loyalty to Him." He was quick to discern and cordially ready to commend the noble virtues of this church. We have here three commendable qualities specified.

1. *The Life was right.* Thou 'hast borne, and hast patience and for my name's sake hast laboured and hast not fainted' (ver. 3). She laboured without fainting, persevered in the face of immense difficulties and fierce opposition; endured wrong patiently, resisted evil nobly; spent her energies without stint even to exhaustion; yet her spirit was fresh and buoyant.

2. The *doctrine* was right. The church at Ephesus hated both the doctrine and practice of the Nicolaitans. We have no definite knowledge of the sect which bore this name, but we judge from the record we have, that they were in doctrine and life akin to modern Antinomians. They abused the doctrines of

grace, basely perverted the freedom of the gospel. They linked some of the base practices of their former heathenism with the holy religion of Christ. With a profession of Christianity they associated a careless, licentious, vicious life. They attempted to establish concord between Christ and Belial. They claimed to be children of light, and yet did the works of darkness. They professed to be new men in Christ Jesus, and yet did not feel it imperative to crucify the old man with his affections and lusts. The teaching which sanctioned such infamous practices the church at Ephesus hated; and her Lord commends her for her fidelity.

3. The *discipline* was right. "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (ver. 2). With apostolic authority Paul while labouring in Ephesus warned them of these false teachers. Acts xx. 29, 30, "For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." These pretenders asserted that Paul, John and Timothy had misunderstood the teaching of Jesus, and that they had been sent to correct their errors, and to give the true teaching. They alone held the key which opened the gate of the temple of divine truth. But it soon became evident that they were

speaking perverse things. Their teaching was more in harmony with the pride of intellect, and of self-righteousness, more agreeable to the spirit of the world, to the carnal nature, and to the lusts of the flesh, and they succeeded in drawing away some disciples after them. No sooner did these impostors arise than the Church arises to her duty, exposes their errors, tests the false teachers in the balance of the sanctuary, and found them wanting. Faithful to her trust, this church dealt promptly with these apostolic usurpers, sternly putting them away, and excluding them as grievous wolves ravaging the Church, the flock of the Great Shepherd.

III. Christ now reveals, and reproves her FAULT.

"I have against thee, that thou didst let go thy first love." Our Lord estimates the Ephesian Church, not by her external toil or patience, but by her inward motive, the state of her heart towards Himself. Love, supreme love to Christ was the motive under which the Church formerly laboured; and this our Lord fully recognises when He says, 'For my Name's sake thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted.' The labour continued, the patience remained, the outward activities were unchanged; but the heart had changed; love as the inward propelling force was wanting. If not wholly gone, it had manifestly declined; if not extinct, the heart was not so much

aflame with it. The altar of the heart had nothing but dying embers, the temple of the soul was becoming dark and cold. In this declining love, Jesus Christ saw the beginning of a downward course, the initial stage of a foul apostasy, and therefore admonishes his Church, I have against thee that thou hast let go thy first love.

I am not sure, whether Paul when writing his Epistle to the Ephesians had not detected some suspicious signs of this decaying love. The last word in that epistle is "*sincerity.*" He closes the letter with the prayer,—"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity"—margin — in incorruptness, or incorruption. The word rendered here "sincerity" is the same as that which Paul employs in the Corinthian epistle, when he speaks of the resurrection body, and there rendered "incorruption"—"this corruptible must put on incorruption." Paul, with the last stroke of his pen, desires, prays that the love of the Ephesians to Christ may be as incorruptible as the immortal body of the resurrection. He knew right well, that the decay of love was the decay of that without which all other graces are as nothing, and that no service can be acceptable without the love of the heart. Paul, with his keen spiritual insight, must have discovered some indications that love was on the decline, when he gives as his last word to the Ephesian

Church the covert caution — "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptness."

For the want of this love, the Church, in the estimation of Jesus Christ, had *fallen*. We have known a person apparently in robust health consulting his physician, who, after careful examination, concludes that the heart is feeble, the pulsation intermittent, indicating a serious decline of vital energy. Jesus Christ the Divine Healer puts his hand on the heart of the Ephesian Church, and finds the pulse of love feeble, fickle, ready to cease at any moment, and gives as his diagnosis—"Thou hast let go thy first love."

Here then, we have a church orthodox in her creed, unwearied in her labour, uncomplaining in her patience, faithful in her discipline, and yet fallen —fallen through the failure of her love. Nothing is more hateful to Christ than the mere external form of religion while the heart is cold and destitute of love. Hypocrisy is the offensive thing which He spues out of his mouth with infinite abhorrence. The Pharisees who prayed at the corner of the streets that they might be seen of men, who distributed alms publicly that they might be praised of men, were detestable in the sight of Christ. Extremely religious outwardly, but in the inmost heart full of corruption; ostentatious in their charities, yet

all their charity consisted in the hard cold coin in the hand, for there was no love in the heart. For these men our Lord reserved His most fearful denunciations—"Woe unto you scribes, pharisees, hypocrites!" Psalm lxxx. speaks of God being angry at the prayer of his people. Not prayer in the abstract, for the voice of true supplication is music in the ear of Jehovah, but he was angry at the spirit, the motive, the hypocrisy of those who offered the prayer. St. Paul startles us with the statement, that we may possess gifts many, and even graces many, and yet without love we are nothing (1 Cor. xiii. 1–3).

Jesus Christ *yearns for love* more than all else. There was no want of action in the Ephesian Church; what was needed, and what her Lord longed for, was the love which makes the action valuable; for without love all her patience and all her labour were as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. The tender heart of Christ is keenly sensitive to the first touch of coldness. He bewails that coldness in the Ephesian Church, and therefore rebukes her by saying, thou now lovest me not as once thou didst. This sounds like an echo of the touching complaint made against Israel of old—"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals" (Jer. ii. 2). In these words we hear the regretful cry of the heavenly Bridegroom, recalling the early days

of His Bride's love. No more touching rebuke can be administered by a loved one than by saying, 'Thou no longer lovest me enough.' In His great High Priestly prayer His last solemn request is, that His disciples might love Him as the Divine Father loved Him (John xvii. 26). How did the Father love Him? 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand' (John iii. 35). Creating, Sustaining, Redeeming, all things great and small, belonging to all worlds and all beings, both governmental and redemptive, yea, all things are committed with perfect confidence to the Son. Christ demands from his disciples a love that can trust him with all things, at all times, under all possible conditions. The Father's love is communicative. "The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that Himself doeth" (v. 20). No secrets separate the Father from the Son, no hidden purpose, no concealed thought or act to occasion shy distrust, or suspicion; nothing but perfect candour and openness. Such is the love Jesus Christ covets to have from his disciples. You cannot give more and He cannot take less.

The solemn admonitory lesson taught by the Ephesian Church, is that with incessant activities in the service of Christ and of humanity, there may be at the same time a daily decline of personal piety. There was not so much need to take heed to their

doctrine, for in that they were faithful; but there was much need to take heed unto themselves. Christian churches were never more active in promoting the social, the moral and the religious well-being of mankind. The agents are many and manifold. Uplifting forces are in operation in every direction. But the lamentable tendency is, for Christian people to be so absorbed with public activities for the benefit of others, as seriously, if not habitually, to neglect the private duties necessary for the promotion of personal godliness. Many are cheerfully ready to obey the command, Go and work to-day in my vineyard, and yet daily neglect the injunction, 'Stand in awe and sin not, commune with your own heart and be still.' I would not say a word to discourage you in any active service for Christ; but I would have you remember, that, if you pursue these activities at the cost of neglecting soul fellowship with the Word and with God, you will like the Ephesians lose your first love. Work brings you into contact with men, but prayer brings you into immediate solemn contact with God.

Throughout a ministerial course of more than fifty-two years, I have found, that no amount of diligence and fidelity in the professional duties of my ministry, can ever compensate for the neglect of the more private duties of religion. For us ministers,

for you teachers, for you Christian workers, there is no highway to saintliness, but that which has been trodden by the humblest, the most retired, and the most Christ-like of the saints. You must climb the ladder which Jacob saw; you must get as far up above earth and as near heaven as it will carry you, and there commune with God and things heavenly. Personal religion must decay and die without frequent fellowship with God and with the Word. Deeply conscious of this, the Psalmist after summoning the people to praise the Lord would turn in upon himself, and with holy fervour summon his own soul to the work of praise. Fearing, lest in his zeal in calling others to magnify the Lord, he should forget to do so himself, the Psalmist after saying, Praise the Lord all ye people, takes care to add, Praise the Lord, O my soul. He then gives the keynote himself. While I live will I praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

We have heard the professional guide amid the majestic scenery of the Alps, rehearse his story of magnificent landscape scenes, and snowclad heights, with a fluency that awakened both our wonder and admiration, but the rehearsal has been oft repeated for many successive years, so that whatever of kindling enthusiasm the guide may have felt at first, he now goes through the whole mechanically, without

thought or feeling. Christian workers and teachers are in danger of becoming so familiar with divine things by daily speaking of them to others, as at length to talk by mere rote, with no more real feeling than if their words were thrown out by a speaking machine. Their religion becomes simply a mechanical religion, and a mechanical religion is a religion without a soul.

The Church has sometimes to bewail the sad and sudden fall into sin of a prominent Christian worker. In the midst of sacred activities, and the height of popularity, he brings scandal on religion by open transgression. You may however be assured, that the evil act which made public his apostasy, was not the beginning of his fall, but the culmination of a long process of decay. If his heart history were laid open, we should find that we have to look back to a distant past for the beginning of the lapse; when love began to cool; when meaner and lower motives began to usurp dominion; when the secret desire for publicity, for popularity, for human applause, began to mix up with, and to corrupt nobler and better motives. The season for prayer had to be curtailed; self-examination became irksome; Bible-reading neglected; ending at length in the shameful fall, which brings disgrace upon himself, and dishonour on the name of the Lord Jesus.

The saddest thing in connection with the sad his-

tory is, that the decay of his faith, hope and love went on for weeks, months, perhaps years, without his knowledge, and without even suspicion, simply because he had no time, or thought he had no time, to attend to the injunction, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," so that now from the depths of his fall, we may hear the lamentation rising shrill and clear, "They made me the keeper of vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept." Ephraim's apostasy was not known to him. "Strangers have devoured his strength and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not" (Hosea vii. 9). When Jesus was twelve years old Mary and Joseph took him to Jerusalem to the Passover feast, and on the return journey they lost him, and for a whole day did not know that they had lost him. They supposed him to be in the company, and went a day's march with the multitude to Beeroth before they missed him. You may lose Christ from your heart without knowing that you have lost him until some cruel temptation seduces you into open sin, then you sorrowfully learn that you have been long living without him. The Ephesian Church does not seem conscious of heart-apostasy, of decaying love, until her Lord in love admonished her. It was a revelation, a startling surprise, to her when He said, "Thou hast let go thy first love."

IV. Our Lord now instructs the Church WHAT TO DO TO AVOID FINAL APOSTASY (ii. 5). The advice is threefold, Remember, Repent, Reform.

1. *Remember* therefore from whence thou art fallen. This Church had been highly favoured with exceptional privileges. For three years, Ephesus was the scene of Paul's powerful and awakening preaching. There the eloquent Apollos had exercised his captivating and convincing ministry. There the devoted Acquila and Priscilla had laboured much in the Lord. There also the beloved and faithful Tychicus had been God's ambassador; and when John wrote this letter the beloved Timothy was the chief pastor. Remember these your exalted privileges. Consider the state of grace in which you stood when under the ministry of these holy men. Remember the peace and joy which filled your hearts when you received the remission of sins under the ministry of Paul. Remember when in the ardour of your first love, the zeal ye had for God's glory, and the salvation of mankind; your willing obedience, your cheerful self-denial, your fervour in private prayer, your detachment from the world and your heavenly-mindedness. Memories like these, of a nobler and better past, cannot fail to pierce like goads the backsliding heart which has taken up with meaner and lower things.

Our Lord wants you unfaithful ones, who have lost your primitive simplicity and trustfulness, to re-

member the days of his right hand when the candle of the Lord shone upon you, when his paths dropped fatness, when his ways were pleasant, when his Sabbaths were a delight, and his ordinances a feast of fat things. Jesus Christ has not forgotten those days of your first espousals, how ardent your love, how inflamed your zeal, how simple your trust, and how clinging your heart. He remembers them still; he wants you to remember them, and to long for their return, that what you have lost may once more become your own.

2. "*Repent.*" Having by a faithful scrutiny ascertained the heights which you once occupied, and the depths into which you have now fallen; and contrasting your present coldness with your former ardour, repent, mourn with bitterness of soul over the change. Christ demands repentance for decaying love. We are to repent not only for outward acts of transgression, but also for neglecting to keep up the fire of love in the heart. The altar fire came originally from heaven, God kindled it, but it was the priest's duty to feed it, and keep it burning night and day. The holy fire of love divine in the heart came first from God, but he holds you responsible for the maintenance of its glow and fervour. Whenever this love decays, the guilt of it Christ charges upon yourself. You have caused it by neglect and indifference, and he therefore calls upon you to repent.

3. *Reformation.* "Do thy first works." Like the Ephesian Church you have ceased to do your first works, or you are less diligent and less earnest in the performance of them. It is not with some of you as once it was, the Bible not so much read, the delight in it gone, the faith in it shaken and doubtful, the ordinances less frequented, and therefore not so blessed; the Lord's day not so great a joy, Christ not so precious, and you are left to mourn the absence of a rich experience which once was yours. You give expression to your feelings in the language of the hymn:

> What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
> How sweet their memory still!
> But now I find an aching void,
> The world can never fill.

If you would again possess what you have lost, you must use the same means, have recourse to the same duties, meditation, prayer, Bible-reading, self-examination, sacred watchfulness over words and thoughts, as well as acts. If you repent, and do your first works, it shall be with you as it was when you first saw the Lord, the old joy will return, the former experience will be realised afresh; the holy flame of love will be rekindled; the intimate union between you and Jesus re-established; the old breezes from heaven will again refresh the ordinances; Jesus will reappear at the sacramental

table in all the subduing power of his dying love. Instead of the jerky, jaunty, superficial songs of popular modern hymnaries, you will come back to the substantial, noble, exalted strains of our own incomparable hymns:

> Thou hidden love of God, whose height
> Whose depth unfathomed, no man knows
> I see from far thy beauteous light,
> Inly I sigh for thy repose;
> My heart is pained, nor can it be
> At rest, till it finds rest in thee.

or

> I thirst, thou wounded Lamb of God
> To wash me in thy cleansing blood,
> To dwell within thy wounds; then pain
> Is sweet, and life or death is gain.

Instead of selecting for class, and fellowship-meetings, meaningless ditties like "Hold the fort," you will find delight in singing the spiritual strains which our fathers of old sung with both heart and voice—

> O for a heart to praise my God,
> A heart from sin set free!
> A heart that always feels thy blood
> So freely spilt for me!

or

> For ever here my rest shall be,
> Close to thy bleeding side;
> This all my hope, and all my plea,
> For me the Saviour died!

THE BURNT-OFFERING

If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord, . . . he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord : . . . a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord.—LEVITICUS i. 2, 3, 9.

NOTWITHSTANDING all that critics have said we are still strongly inclined to the belief that Moses is the author or compiler of the first five books of the Bible called the Pentateuch. Moses was more highly favoured in the mode and manner he received divine communications than the other writers of Old Testament Scriptures. To the prophets God revealed himself chiefly by dreams and visions; whereas His communications to Moses were direct, personal, by words in an audible voice. "Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold"

(Num. xii. 6–8). In harmony with this, we read in Ex. xxxiii. 9, 11: "And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." And again in Deut. xxxiv. 10, it is said, "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." If Moses lived in face to face, in mouth to mouth communication with the Lord, it is remarkable that it should be recorded that he died in like manner. "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord," or, as some render it, Moses "died upon the mouth of the Lord." The Jewish interpretation is that the Lord put his mouth to the mouth of Moses, and kissed his soul away.

This Book of Leviticus also opens with the emphatic suggestive words: "And the Lord called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation saying, Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them." This opening sentence indicates that the Levitical code of laws contained in this book was delivered to Moses not when he was in a trance, or dream, or ecstasy, but in his ordinary mental state and directly by the voice of God, in a face to face communication.

Leviticus contains the law of the Mosaic Ritual, and under that law there were at least five distinct offerings and sacrifices: Burnt-Offering; Sin-Offering; Trespass-Offering; Meat-Offering; Peace-Offering. Each had its solemn and more or less elaborate ritual; each had its moral significance and symbolised some aspect of the Great Redemption. We propose at present to limit our thoughts to the Burnt-Offering and to interpret its sacred lessons.

There were two distinct classes of Burnt-Offerings; the one national, the other personal; the one obligatory, the other voluntary. The National Burnt-Offering consisted of a lamb presented twice a day at the morning and evening service. On Sabbaths, new moons and festivals, the burnt-offerings were multiplied. These offerings were for the nation and symbolised the constant daily renewal of Israel's consecration as a holy people unto the Lord. See Lev. vi.; Ex. xxix. 38–46.

The private personal burnt-offering was voluntary and presented under special circumstances. When under a solemn sense of obligation to God for special mercies received, or for some great deliverance wrought out, the devout Israelite would of his own accord, without the pressure of any compulsory law, bring an offering and present it unto the Lord on the altar as a whole burnt-offering with the exception of the skin which belonged to the

officiating priests. The first chapter of Leviticus deals exclusively with this personal burnt-offering. Although the offerer is not expressly commanded to bring it, yet he is instructed *what* to bring and *how* to present it so as to find acceptance. If wealthy he must bring a bullock; if he cannot afford this, he may bring a sheep or goat; if too poor to do this, he may bring a dove or pigeon. This gradation was allowed in order that the poorest might have it in his power to present what was acceptable when inwardly prompted. In the East they had no domestic fowls as we have, but doves and pigeons were abundant, usually kept and reared by the poorest of the people, so that the poor would have no difficulty in bringing an acceptable offering.

It is of importance that we should ascertain the true spiritual interpretation of the burnt-offering. What is its symbolic significance? We must remember that it does not symbolise the sacrifice of Christ. The primary idea in it is not sacrificial, that is, not atoning, not propitiatory. Sacrifice has a place in it, but only a subordinate and secondary place. The primary idea is that of entire consecration to God. It is spoken of as the offering of consecration, and was offered at the consecration of priests, of Levites, of kings, of sacred places, as a symbol that the persons and places were devoted, set apart wholly to the sacred service of Jehovah.

It was also offered at the purification of women, of Nazarites, of lepers, and by the recipients of special mercies, partly as a thank-offering but chiefly as a symbol or sign that the offerer was also consecrating his whole self to the God of his mercies.

Our theme is the complete and absolute consecration of our entire personality to God as symbolised in the "whole burnt-offering."

I. It was VOLUNTARY.

The burnt-offering referred to in this chapter is not introduced by the imperative, "Thou shalt bring," but rather—"If any of you bring an offering, he shall offer it of his own voluntary will." The *sin*-offering was sacrificial and compulsory and always preceded the burnt-offering, but the burnt-offering was voluntary. In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul, having at great length expounded the doctrine of salvation through sacrifice, God's method of saving men from sin by the redemption which we have in Christ Jesus, in the twelfth chapter appeals tenderly and earnestly to redeemed men to respond to the self-sacrificing love of Christ by the sacrifice of themselves wholly to him which is their reasonable service. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Christ is our sin-offering; He

is our Passover sacrificed for us as a Lamb without spot, Paul therefore entreats, beseeches with all the strength of his compassion, that we now bring our burnt-offering and present ourselves wholly on his altar to be consumed in the fire of his love. He beseeches for he cannot compel. It must be a free-will offering. This does not however exclude motives or inducements. Freedom implies absence of force, not absence of inducements. God sanctions the employment of motives and inducements. Paul employs them when he says, "I beseech you by the mercies of God," and again, for it is "your reasonable service." Man, in the economy of redemption is appealed to as a reasonable, responsible being, capable of deciding to what purpose his abilities shall be devoted. The appeal is made on the supposition that man has the power to resist the inducements, and to withhold himself and his powers from God. Many things come to men without their choice, without even the opportunity of making a choice; but no man has become, and no man can ever become, a disciple of Jesus Christ without choosing to be one. God cannot force a man to be a Christian. To force you would be to take away your will, and to destroy your manhood. You would cease to be man, and become a mere machine. This may explain what sometimes is perplexing and mysterious. You have a loved one living in sin, alienated from God;

for his conversion you have prayed daily and fervently, tears many you have shed, sighs many have rent your heart; and yet, after years of mighty pleadings with God on his behalf, he remains unchanged, still lost to God and good. There comes upon you the awful temptation to doubt God's fidelity to his promise as the Hearer of prayer. But remember, that God cannot in answer to ten thousand prayers, and if all the saints on earth and in heaven joined you in your supplications, God cannot in harmony with human freedom force your loved one to be saved. I do not want to discourage you in the work of intercession. God forbid! If God cannot force the wayward wanderer into the paths of righteousness and peace; I can tell you what He may do, and what He will do in answer to prayer, He will bring a mightier power to bear upon him, and visit him with stronger convictions, so as to make sinning more difficult, and conversion more probable. To you young people, who think that God *must* in due time answer to the full the prayers of saintly parents, this is very admonitory. God may work in you to will, and to do; but this will be of no avail unless you work out what God works within. Your will must co-operate with God's working. Instead of resisting, you must yield. "Work out your salvation" etc. (Phil. ii. 12, 13). Whenever your salvation takes place, if it ever does, it must be

by the surrender of yourself, of your own voluntary will. Christ forces no man into his service, and he will accept of no followers but volunteers.

II. The consecration of self must be COMPLETE. This was a *whole* burnt-offering. Other offerings were divided; a part to the offerer, a part to the priest, and a part to God; but in the case of the burnt-offering, the entire carcass, whether animal or bird, must be placed on God's altar, and burnt in God's fire. No part given to the offerer, no part to the priest, all given to God. So also must our whole being be consecrated to God; all we have, all we are, all we do, all possibilities of body, soul and spirit; no part given to Satan, no part given to the world, nothing reserved for self; but all given to God. When the burnt-offering was brought to God the offerer placed his hand upon the head of the victim. What did this ceremony signify? We know what it signified in connection with the sin-offering, and on the great day of atonement. On that great day the priest, with his hand pressing heavily on the head of the victim, confessed over it the sins of the nation, and by confession transferred symbolically the sins of Israel to the victim, and with the sins thus laid upon it the victim was put to death, and that death was counted sacrificial. In the case of the sin-offering, the offerer with his hand

upon the victim's head confessed his personal sins, and by confession, transferred them to the victim, and the death was sacrificial. In the burnt-offering the hand was placed on the head of the victim, but there was no confession of sin, no sins were ceremonially laid on the offering, and the death of the animal was not sacrificial. The ritual of placing the hand on the burnt-offering signified, not the transference of sin; but the transference of the offerer's individuality or personality to the offering. It established an identity between him and that which he offered. He seemed to say, I place this animal whole upon thine altar as a symbol of the absolute surrender of myself, of all I have, and of all I am to Thee. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Yes, "*Whatsoever*"—nothing too small, nothing too great, nothing divided, but all, 'whatsoever,' must be presented on the altar. Nothing can be withheld. To withhold one thing is an act of rebellion against divine authority. One white hair under the law was a proof of leprosy. A love to one sin, or a refusal to give up that sin, is conclusive evidence that the man is still dead in sin. The young man in the gospel came to Christ with the question, Good Master what good thing must I do that I may have eternal life? Christ mentioned some of the commandments, and the young ruler replied, All these have I kept from my youth.

What lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." This seems a hard condition, but I am not sure that Jesus Christ would ultimately demand the surrender of all his earthly possessions; but he did demand the willing will. When God demanded from Abraham the sacrifice of his only son, and when Abraham revealed his absolute submission, and prepared in good faith for the work of obedience, just as the sacrificial knife was about to fall, God said, Stay thine hand, put not to death the son of promise, I am content with the ready will to do it at my command. Our Lord might have acted in like manner towards this young man had he revealed the same ready mind to obey. But why did Christ impose so hard, so difficult a condition? This seems to me to be the explanation, if we may be allowed to paraphrase our Lord's answer. One thing thou lackest. Thou callest me Master, but I am not thy master, another rules within thee. The money lust is thy master, he controls thy life, he occupies the throne of thy heart, and while he is supreme I cannot become thy Master. No man can serve two masters. I cannot become partner with the usurping foe, I cannot share the kingdom with another. I can only mount an empty throne. I therefore demand that there be a ready mind, a willing will to renounce for

ever the service of the old king, that I may become sovereign Lord of all thou hast and art.

When very young I remember seeing a ship launched. The crowd was great, every preparation made for the ceremony, but when the signal was given, the vessel did not move, disappointment and consternation spread over the multitude, men were despatched to see that all the ropes were loosened, all the props removed; after long research, they found a small pebble washed up by the tide lodged under the keel of the ship, and which effectually resisted the force of that ponderous structure. That stone removed, the ship glided down the smooth oily surface prepared for it, into the rising tide. Some hidden sin in the depth of your soul, it may be unsuspected, hinders the fulfilment of the divine purpose; you must search it out, and having found it, you must remove it; then your soul will make a generous launch into the ocean of God's love. "One thing thou lackest."

III. The animal or bird offered in the burnt-offering must be *the man's own.* He must have reared it or bought it, AN OFFERING WHICH COST HIM SOMETHING. It was fitting that one should offer to God that which had become endeared to the owner, as having cost the most care and labour in its bringing up. Only domestic animals were allowed.

Not even a clean animal was permitted if it were taken in hunting. That cost nothing beyond the pleasures of the chase.

It will cost you something to make this complete surrender of self to God. You will not find it easy to renounce the evil habits of years. We are to crucify the old man with his affections and lusts. It requires a bold man, with a strong will, to take this old man of self, to drive into his hands and feet the nails of self-denial; to fasten him to the tree of shame; and there let him linger and die, unpitied and unwept. But even when this is done, remember that the claims of Christ go much further. He demands not simply the surrender of evil, but also the surrender of self; the consecration of your whole being to His will. To cease to employ your powers for evil is not sufficient, they must be wholly employed for God. "Dead to sin, alive to God."

When men inclined to follow Christ came to Him for instruction, while he cheered them with the promise of great blessedness, and of perfect rest; yet, at the same time, he was clear and explicit in setting forth the stern conditions of Christian discipleship. Nicodemus (John iii.). "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke ix. 23; Matt. x. 37, 38). On his last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, a casual traveller falls in with the

company, and impressed with the character and sayings of Christ, volunteered to say, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Jesus instantly replied, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke ix. 58). Insults, neglect, suffering, persecution will be thy lot if thou follow me. A man must brace himself up for trials and conflicts in this evil world, if he become my disciple. By speaking thus, I do not want to discourage you in this work of consecration. It is however better that you should be forewarned of the difficulties, than that they should come upon you unawares, and find you unprepared for the encounter. If the difficulties be great and serious, remember that you can claim an interest in the promise made to Paul, for in Christ, that promise is made over to you, and to every one that believeth—"My grace is sufficient for thee." In possession of that grace, you may with Paul hurl defiance at every opposition, and say, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me."

IV. The burnt-sacrifice was AN OFFERING UNTO THE LORD. "He shall offer it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord."

The whole burnt-offering is expressed by a word which signifies "*ascending*." Science teaches, that

the effect of fire upon the substance of a body, is to resolve it into gases which rise from it. The vapour which ascends is not something different from that which is burnt, but the very thing itself; its essence; and having ascended, it becomes a sweet savour unto Jehovah. The odour of the smoke and flame arising from the burnt carcass of the animal in itself would be offensive, rather than sweet; but on account of what that offering symbolised — the entire consecration of the offerer, body, spirit, soul unto the Lord, it ascended as a sweet-smelling savour unto the Lord. It is remarkable that the phrase sweet-smelling savour unto Jehovah is never used in relation to the sin-offering or trespass-offering; but it is often used in relation to the burnt-offering; the offering of consecration; to signify that God is well pleased by the entire surrender of ourselves to his will and service.

Saint Bernard once said, "Nothing, Lord, that is *Thine* can suffice *me* without *Thyself*." A great and bold word for any man to address to God; but Is it true? Has God no gifts, no wealth of grace that can fill and satisfy the human soul unless He gives himself? Can the finite be filled only with the Infinite? No, brethren. God has made you for Himself. There is a spirit in man, and nothing less than the Infinite Spirit of God can fill it. Bernard however solemnly uttered the counterpart, "Nothing

that is *mine* can be pleasing to Thee without *myself*." Wealth, talent, time, and toil are unacceptable without yourself.

The burnt-offering of consecration is called the bread of God, or the food of Jehovah (Lev. xxi. 6, xxii. 25). The ancient heathen held the notion that by sacrificing clean animals, they were providing food for their gods, doing them honour, and so securing for themselves the good pleasure of their gods. It would appear that there were some in Israel who rose no higher than this gross conception of the meaning of sacrificing. They entertained the base carnal idea, that by sacrificing they were supplying Jehovah with acceptable food, and by the blood shed supplying him with acceptable drink. In Psalm l. God sharply rebukes Israel for these unworthy thoughts. "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" Jehovah needs none of these material things. And if he did, they are his already; He is sovereign Proprietor. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. He then teaches them, that the bread or food of Jehovah is that which these sacrifices symbolise. "Offer unto God thanksgiving: and pay thy vows unto the Most High; And call upon me in the day of trouble." He asks for thanksgiving; loyal fulfilment

of covenant engagements to Him; loving trust which calls on him in the day of trouble; in short the consecration of your whole being on his altar to his service;—this is the bread or the food of God. For this he longs, he yearns, he hungers, entreats, and when given, He rejoices. When you give yourself wholly to God you give him something that was not his before. This is the food of Jehovah. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. li. 17). The same idea is present also in Rev. iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me." Observe God's order. Christ must first sup with you, and afterwards you shall sup with him. But you are ready to say—What have I to place on my table worthy of so illustrious a Guest? How is it possible for me to supply a feast for so great a Visitor? I nothing have, I nothing am, excluded is my every boast; my glory is swallowed up in shame. Poor and needy as you are, you have something that He will appreciate, and be to him more precious than gold; something that to his holy soul will be a feast of fat things. You can bring tears of repentance, sighs of contrition, confessions of having grieved him, holy vows that you will do so no more. Place these on your table, and he will rejoice over them as a

rich delightsome festivity. Then, when he has supped with you, you shall sup with Him. If you give him penitent tears and a contrite heart, He will give you in return the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for heaviness. If you give him confessions of sin, and vows of consecration; He will give you the kingdom which is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Christianity has for its final purpose the restoration of lost man to God. Within the realm of nature around us, man is the only being lost to God. Mountains and valleys, oceans and rivers, trees and fields, animals and birds, stars and systems—all these are in their places, all are his servants, serving his sovereign Will, all fulfil their mission. God has not to go after any of them to bring them back from their wanderings. Man is the only being alienated from God, wandering far away, and unable to find his way back; in actual rebellion, moving outside and contrary to His Will; out of harmony with himself, with the universe and with God. Longing to bring you back into the divine harmony, into the grand march of obedient worlds, God comes Himself in search of his lost one. The whole machinery of redemption is set up for this purpose. The Son came to redeem, the Spirit is now searching. The Bible, Ministers, Sabbaths, Ordinances are all at work, pursuing and seeking the lost to bring them back to

God and righteousness. God Himself entreats, warns, calls, urges, as if He could not rest until the wanderers are restored. It seems as if God could not enjoy to the full the obedience of all other things, all other beings, all other worlds while man is in rebellion and lost.

> Fountain of good! All blessing flows
> From Thee; no want thy fulness knows
> What but thyself canst thou desire?
> Yet, Self-sufficient as Thou art
> Thou dost desire my worthless heart;
> This, only this, dost thou require.

V. The ritual of the Burnt-offering suggests, that we must present ourselves to God THROUGH CHRIST JESUS, THE HIGH PRIEST of our profession.

We have already intimated that the burnt-offering was not intended primarily to be a type of the sacrifice of Christ, nevertheless, the priest occupies an important place in the ritual. The animal or bird in the burnt-offering was both presented and slain by the offerer himself, and not by the priest, as in the case of the sin-offering and trespass-offering. But there is a point in the ritual where the priest steps in to perform his sacred functions. When the offerer slays the victim by blood-shedding, it is the office of the priest to receive the flowing blood in a sacred vessel, and then to sprinkle the blood, not on the altar, but around the altar, and afterwards to

place the carcass orderly on the altar to be consumed by God's fire. Thus teaching us, that, through Christ our High Priest alone, we must present ourselves to God; and through Him alone does the offering become acceptable. The consciousness of sin unfits us for divine approach, but the sprinkled blood makes atonement, or a covering for the sinful offerer. When you consecrate your whole self to God, it must be under the covering of the atoning blood. Through Christ is the only way to God. We are accepted only in the Beloved.

When the High Priest places you as a living sacrifice on God's altar, the fire of God receives and purifies you; not the fire of vengeance, or retribution, or penalty, but the fire of love; not the fire of wrath, but the purifying flame, which is a token of acceptance. The fire it seems to us symbolises the Holy Spirit as the purifier, who takes away our dross and corruptions. The High Priest gives the fire.

> To send fire on earth he came,
> Kindled in some hearts it is.

Now when the offering is consumed, the priest must put off his sacrificial vestments; put on other garments, and arrayed in these, he must gather up the ashes from the altar and carry them away outside the camp. Thus teaching us, that, while the Holy Spirit is the Purifier, we must co-operate

with Him, and cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. Augustine once said, "Let thy fire entirely consume me, so that nothing of me may remain to myself."

O that it now from heaven might fall,
And all my sins consume!
Come Holy Ghost, for thee I call,
Spirit of burning, come!

VI. The act of consecration is IRREVOCABLE, it cannot be recalled.

When the burnt-offering had been consumed by the altar fire and made to ascend in smoke and flame to heaven, it could not be recalled; it has been presented for ever to the Lord. Men sometimes engage in earthly masters' services for a definite and limited period, a year, two, or seven. Christ accepts none into his service for a limited time, only for life, and for ever. He demands not only your whole self, but for all time. When you consecrate yourself to God, you do it for ever; you must not withdraw. The covenant has been made through sacrifice, and is registered on high; nothing can blot it out, or cancel it. You may break the covenant vow, you may prove faithless to it, but that does not release you, that does not cancel the record. Whether you keep the covenant or

break it, the record still stands on the book of the covenant against your name, and you will be held responsible for it in the day of God.

An old Puritan once said, Having given your heart to God it is no longer yours to give to another. If Satan wants your heart, send him to Christ, and tell him, My heart is no longer mine, I have given it to the Lord Jesus. When you present a gift to a loved friend, it would be a gross insult to demand its return that you may give it to another, and especially if that other be the enemy of your friend.

Who will consecrate himself this day unto the Lord? Reading the other day a sermon of one of the Puritans on "My son give me thine heart," he closes with a very pithy, forceful application:—I am a Collector for God; my business here to-day is to gather hearts for the Lord Jesus. This also is our solemn business with you on this occasion, and we therefore press upon you the all-important question, Who will consecrate himself this day unto the Lord? When the Germans vanquished the French in Sedan in 1870, King William demanded from the Emperor Napoleon, not an elaborate speech, but his sword, the symbol of absolute surrender. So when Christ conquers, he requires no eloquent prayer, simply surrender. Hand over to him the weapons with which you have fought against him; place your

arms at his feet; disarmed, give yourself to him. The victorious general entering the besieged and battered city does not demand an address from the civic authorities; but he demands the keys of the gates. So Christ demands the key of your heart. His demand is reasonable and right, therefore say to Him—

> Take my poor heart and let it be
> For ever closed to all but thee.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S LOVE

The love of the Spirit.—Rom. xv. 30.

THE Bible is emphatically a revelation, not an argument. Its final appeal is not to the reason, nor to the imagination; but to the heart. It neither attempts nor professes to prove all it reveals. Many fundamental truths it assumes or simply affirms. We look in vain in the Bible for an elaborate argument to prove the existence of God. The book opens with this assumption. 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' The whole Book is written on the supposition that the Infinite Eternal Personality called God exists. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is also clearly revealed and everywhere assumed, but not argued or explained. The Bible presents inexplicable mysteries and insuperable difficulties, unless we admit that there are three Persons in the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, co-equal and co-eternal.

The Scriptures further teach that the three Persons co-operate in the work of human Redemption. Each has his own appropriate place and appointed work,

and each displays in his own sphere a magnitude of love which cannot be measured. The Father loves, and gives his Son and accepts his substitution; the Son loves, and gives Himself a voluntary sacrifice for the fallen; the Holy Spirit loves, and takes up his abode in this sinning world as an ever-active agent, graciously working on men to accomplish in them the final purposes of redemption. One of the errors which threaten the Christian Church in the present day is, that of undervaluing the office of the Holy Spirit as compared with that of the Son. Even good men are in danger of being so absorbed with the intervention of Christ on their behalf, and their obligation to Him as Redeemer, as to have little or no thought to bestow on that part of their redemption assigned to the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures nowhere warrant the supposition that we are more indebted to one Person in the Trinity than to the others. The doctrine of the Bible is, that the Father, the Son and the Spirit, are equally interested in effecting our deliverance from sin and misery, and that therefore they have equal claims on our gratitude and love. Let us not hastily conclude that it was a greater display of love on the part of the Father to give the Son of his love, or on the part of the Son to give Himself, than for the Spirit to give his pure and almighty agency to apply the remedial scheme to the human heart and conscience. Far be it from us to

attempt to exalt the love of one of the Divine Persons by the disparagement of the love of the others. Our aim is simply to bring before you the Holy Spirit's love, the extent of his benevolent activities; his manifold and persistent efforts to renew and transform your character, and to remind you of your solemn obligation and the extent of your responsibility.

The phrase employed by Saint Paul in the text, is to be understood as denoting, *not* the love which we bear to the Spirit; nor yet the love which is produced in us by the agency of the Spirit and which is called the fruit of the Spirit; but the love which the Holy Spirit manifests towards us. We shall limit ourselves on this occasion to four aspects of His love.

I. His *Restraining* Love.
II. His *Convicting* Love.
III. His *Forbearing* Love.
IV. His *Condescending* Love.

I. His RESTRAINING Love.

Everywhere sinful men are acting under the dominion of base selfish passions; but men everywhere are conscious that these passions are not allowed to work their evil ways unchecked or unrestrained. In heathen as well as in Christian countries, the universal consciousness testifies that there are mysterious, mighty, persistent forces in active operation on the hearts of men, curbing,

restraining, suppressing their malignant passions. Explain it as you please, ascribe it to whatever agency you think it, the fact is undeniable; for every man is a living witness of it. To deliver man from the thraldom of these usurping forces of evil we must have a spiritual agency of authority and power. The economy of redemption supplies such an agency in the Person of the Holy Spirit whose office it is to subdue and expel these ruling powers of evil. When passion prompts a man to an evil act, the Spirit of the Lord like an officer of law puts his hand on the transgressor, arrests him, restrains him, makes him pause, hesitate and consider; then the passion protests and resists. Hence the conflict. The two forces of good and evil come into collision, or in the language of scripture, the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; these being contrary the one to the other.

A monstrous scheme of criminal wickedness is devised by half a dozen men who are all sworn to secrecy. Weeks or months are employed in maturing the plot, with the hope of accomplishing their malignant purpose without detection, and without even suspicion. In the meantime, one of the conspirators is the subject of a strange unrest; visions haunt him by night, voices speak to him by day. Ease of mind he cannot find in the throng of the city or in the solitude of home; in the gay, fashionable

circle or in the excitement and glare of the theatre. Hunted down by his fears, he feels he dare not advance another step. To relieve his agony, he suddenly withdraws from his fellow-conspirators; and to ease his conscience, he makes known the conspiracy to others outside the plot; and the malignant scheme collapses. How can we account for the strange mysterious power which wrought the change in the man's purpose and action? No human friend ever reasoned or remonstrated with him, no human voice ever spoke to him of the enormity of the purposed crime, or of the terrible consequences of persisting in it. Deny the agency of the Holy Spirit, and the case is inexplicable; but admit that agency, no mystery remains, the whole is plain. We have no hesitation in believing and affirming that it was the Holy Spirit that confronted the man, that dared him to persevere in his malignity, that struck irresolution into his soul, that broke up the infamous plot, and so cast the shield of his protecting power over the intended victim.

The murderer, intent on shedding blood under the cover of night, plants himself in a lonely spot under the overspreading tree, and waits for his victim, who is known to pass that way on certain hours and usually well furnished with the proceeds of the day's business. Presently he hears footsteps approaching, he sees a human form looming into view in the pale

moonlight, and within himself whispers, Yes, it is the man, my victim. He now prepares himself for the attack; but at the moment when the fatal spring is about to be made, some invisible power comes down upon him, fills him with terror, he staggers back into his hiding-place, and the intended victim passes homeward without even a suspicion of peril. Whose power is it that grappled so strangely and suddenly and put a hook in the nose and a bridle in the mouth of the shedder of blood? There is no human being near to reason or restrain. It was none other, as we believe, than the power of the Holy Spirit.

Take a wider view, and think of the whole race of humanity. Suppose that all men from the beginning had been left wholly to the dominion and working of their own base passions; that the arresting power of the Holy Spirit had never operated on men; what would be the condition of our world to-day? Society dislocated, nations disorganised, monarchs discrowned, righteousness in the dust, anarchy and crime in the ascendency, and the race sunk in degradation and woe if not exterminated each man by the hand of his brother. If a history could be written of all the monstrous schemes of wickedness defeated by the direct action of God on the hearts of men, it could not fail to command both wonder and admiration, while it revealed our infinite indebtedness to the

Holy Spirit for the marvellous and manifold achievements of his restraining love.

Limit the thought for a moment to your own personal history, and think what your present condition would be if through life you had been left without a visit from God, without once feeling the touch of the Divine Hand upon your will and heart. It cannot be doubted that the very worst man in this assembly, whoever that man may be, would be inconceivably more debased than he is, if from childhood he had been absolutely let alone by God. No man has had his way of evil always and everywhere unchecked. An invisible power has thrown obstacles in your way which you dare not surmount. Briars and thorns have in some unaccountable way hedged up your path, and you have feared the stinging and the wounding. Some spiritual personality with a fiery sword has met you in the way of evil, and shuddering at the awful presence, you retraced your steps and repented yourself of the purposed evil. There is not one among us that can reckon up in order the total sum of his indebtedness to the Holy Spirit for his restraining love, or what the Puritan Fathers termed pre-venient or preventing grace.

II. His CONVICTING Love.

The gracious provision made by Christ Jesus is ample and adequate to meet the exigencies of a lost

world; but when we proclaim its all-sufficiency, a formidable difficulty meets us at the very outset—man does not feel his need of it. Blind to his peril, he fondly imagines that he can do without redemption. Ignorant of his real moral condition, he flatters himself that his case is not so desperate as to demand the marvellous interposition of the Son of God. In his estimation, sin is only a trifling evil, a weakness, a foible, the harmless indulgence of our natural propensities. With such views of sin, the tragic scenes of Calvary will be to the man nothing more than a pompous parade, or a meaningless display. He sees no grandeur, no depth, no meaning in the scheme of human redemption. Some great moral agency must be had to rend the veil which hides himself from himself, to remove the dense darkness which broods over the depth of his being, and to awaken him to a solemn sense of his condition and danger. It is certain he will not seek refuge until he sees his peril; he will not seek a remedy until he is made conscious of his disease; he will not seek the Saviour until he is made to feel he is lost. You cannot produce within him this conviction by any process of reasoning. Logic alone can never lodge in any heart that conviction of sin which issues in genuine repentance. The economy of redemption provides for this difficulty by the appointment of the Holy Spirit as an abiding active Person-

ality, to work upon conscience, heart, and will a conviction of sin. "And when He is come, He will reprove (convict) the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment."

Jesus Christ will be of little or no value to you until you come to the knowledge of sin, and are convinced that the damning evil is within you. The Pharisees had no malignant sores to be healed, and therefore rejected the Divine Healer. Over their self-deception the Saviour pronounced upon them his most dreadful woes. Outwardly they were like whited sepulchres; but inwardly they were full of putrefaction and loathsomeness. When Saul of Tarsus was attired with self-righteousness he persecuted the Christ, but when the heavenly light shone through and under the deceitful garb, and revealed the vileness within, he devoutly cried, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? He was glad to touch the Healer when he saw and felt himself to be the chief of sinners.

When the Holy Spirit first comes upon a man his business is to reveal sin, its hideousness, enormity, baseness. He reveals what sin is. He holds up the law in all its sanctity, and charges man with having broken it. He brings him under condemnation, shuts him up under the law, hems him all round with the law, and extorts the cry, I have sinned. Now that he feels the difficulty of escaping the curse

of the law, in agony of spirit he cries, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? How can a man be just with God? When the transgressor, thus awakened, eagerly looks for a door of hope, and yearns for deliverance, he does not always and at once repair to the divinely appointed Deliverer. Christ is not always the first refuge to which the convicted sinner runs. He tries others less obnoxious to his pride. He attempts reformation, gives up some of his evil habits, cultivates morality, then pleads self-righteousness. The Holy Spirit meets this difficulty by pursuing the sinner in his wanderings, striving with him in his obstinacy, making him feel the insufficiency of every defence, breaking down every false refuge, driving him from every hiding-place, until he is constrained to come to the only true Refuge crying,

> Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee.

The Holy Spirit reproves or convicts of the sin of unbelief. 'Of sin because they believe not on me.' Moses and the Prophets constantly reproved the people for not keeping the Law; Christ always reproved men for not believing in Him. His most awful denunciations were hurled against unbelief. According to the teaching of Christ, unbelief was the sin of sins, the sin which brings damnation. While

unbelief remains all other sins remain, and are retained; but when unbelief gives place to faith, all other sins are remitted. This teaching of Christ is continued by the Holy Spirit. He convicts of sin, not so much of the sin of breaking the law as of the sin of unbelief. He teaches that there is redemption for all men from all sin in Jesus Christ; but that there is no provision for the unbelief which persistently rejects Him. This then is the awful truth which the Spirit fastens on the conscience, that if you perish, you perish not because you are a sinner, but because you spurn the sure remedy of infinite Love. The most piercing, agonising word that can fall on the lost in the world of retribution will be,—'they believed not on me.'

When the Holy Spirit in the exercise of his ministry convicts of sin, the operation is painful and sometimes agonising. How can this be a ministry of love? On a dark foggy night you walk along the high cliffs on the seacoast. You miss your path, and wander you know not whither. Suddenly someone turns on the electric light whose silvery radiance reveals your exact position, and to your horror you discover that you are approaching the edge of the precipice; another step or two in the same direction and you are plunged into the dark abyss and dashed against the rocks below. The revelation is horrifying; but it came in time for you

to retrace your steps, and saved you from sudden destruction. The surgeon's knife when it lays bare the root of the disease is painful and excruciating, but it prepares the way for the physician's hand to pour in the healing balm. So the Spirit reveals your sin and peril, not that He may terrify you, but that He may turn you in another direction, To seek a hiding-place in the Atonement. The conviction which he produces ought not to create despair, for it is always illumined with hope. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto you. With the revelation of sin He gives a revelation of the Redeemer from sin. This ministry of conviction may issue in one of two ways—in faith or in impenitence. If in the struggle the Spirit succeeds and the sinner consents to yield, the issue is faith and salvation; but if the sinner offers persistent resistance and the Spirit consequently fail, the issue is impenitence, hardness, and finally utter destruction without remedy.

III. The FORBEARING Love of the Spirit.

The mother displays great love when with unwearied diligence and sleepless vigilance, by night and by day, she watches the sickly infant, utterly forgetful of her own need of rest and sleep. But this is not the highest expression of a mother's love. That child becomes a youth of profligate habits,

breaks away heartlessly from all parental restraints, becomes negligent and cruel to her who bore him, yet, notwithstanding all his rebellion and baseness, she still cares for him, yearns over him with a tenderness of compassion which only a mother can feel. She employs every means which love can invent to overcome his obstinacy and ingratitude, and to allure him into better ways and a nobler life. This is the highest expression of a mother's love, but it only faintly shadows forth the forbearing love of the Eternal Spirit.

Coming as He does with the most disinterested motive to confer on you eternal benefits, one might have thought that you would at once attend, yield, and accept gladly the proferred good; whereas, you resist and spurn the blessing, without which you must perish for ever. Had He been your malignant enemy, had He come to curse instead of to bless, you could not have striven against him with a more desperate energy. The subject on which He addresses you is of infinite, eternal importance; his message is one of peace and love; and yet, you will not listen. He warns of impending danger; with the finger of compassion He points to coming vengeance, and bids you escape; but you heed him not. With infinite tenderness He reasons with you on the folly of your course, and urges upon you the claims of the Redeemer, but you are deaf to all his reasoning.

We have a strong conviction that, in the majority of instances, a mighty struggle is maintained with the rebel sinner to the last. You may join in the solemn procession which accompanies the remains of the unrenewed man to the place of burial, you may witness the descent of his body into the lonely sepulchre, but you may at the same time be assured, that the wretched man has not been given over to destruction without the resolute resistance, and the solemn pleadings of the Spirit of Grace. If the history of his heart were laid open, you would discover that he has fallen fighting with convictions, which, if obeyed, would have led him to immortality. But why is the sinner pursued thus in his wanderings, reasoned with in his rebellion, striven with in his obstinacy for years together? Why not leave him after the first overture and the first rejection to the perverseness of his own will and the unbelief of his own heart? Why does not the Holy Spirit after the first repulse swear in his wrath that He will no longer strive with such a rebel? Why does He not quit for ever the threshold of the heart that is barred against him, and write with his finger of light over the portal Ichabod? And as he takes his final departure why does He not say, He has provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, Why should he be stricken any more? The only reason in the universe is the forbearing love of the Spirit,

who is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repenttance.

IV. The CONDESCENDING Love of the Spirit.

The mission of Jesus Christ was to reconcile God to the world; the mission of the Holy Spirit is to reconcile the world to God. Jesus Christ had to do with the Lawgiver; the Holy Spirit has to do with the lawbreaker. Jesus Christ did a great work for us as Substitute and Representative; the Holy Spirit operates upon us and within us, and has selected as the theatre of his operation the human heart with all its enmity, depravity and offensiveness. There would be an obvious incompleteness in the scheme of redemption without the agency of the Holy Spirit. Christ by redeeming us has shed the light of hope on the darkness of our despair, but it is of no avail while men are blind and lack the capacity of seeing; but to complete the scheme, the Spirit must be given to open the eyes of our understanding and to give us the faculty of spiritual discernment. The Redeemer paid the purchase-price of our freedom; but the Holy Spirit is needed to dissolve the fetters, to remove the barriers, and to lead the captive forth into liberty. Jesus Christ has thrown open the kingdom of heaven to all men; but man

cannot grope his way thither. He needs an infallible guide. The Holy Spirit assumes the office, takes man by the hand, and translates him from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of his Love. Clad as in triple mail, the heart withstands all human means employed for its subjugation; the conscience, secure in its false confidences, and quiet because the faculty of feeling is almost dead, if not twice dead, and plucked up by the root, every shaft of truth falls pointless at its feet. In this condition, the Holy Spirit is needed to strip the heart of the armour wherein the strong man trusted; to thrill the conscience with a quickened sense; to give it a sensibility of sin, a pain to feel it near, that under fearful apprehensions, the awakened soul may hasten to the forgiving God crying, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.'

The condescending love of the Spirit is revealed in his selection of the human heart with all its vileness as the material on which to show forth the might of his grace. Name the sins of mankind, look down the dark catalogue of iniquities, see them in all their atrocity and aggravation; and remember that all have their origin, their birthplace in the heart. 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness,

blasphemies' (Matt. xv. 19). The sight of such a heart, if laid bare, would be overpowering to the wicked man himself, and would fill him with shame and confusion. The more holy a man is the more painful will be the nearness and the sight of sin, and the more will he shrink from it when he finds it nestling in his own heart. How much more offensive must the sinful heart be to the chaste and pure eyes of the Divine Spirit, to whom all evils are open, and from whom no polluted stain can be hid! And yet this Being of spotless purity comes to your heart, abides there as a Divine Worker, struggling with its manifold evils, and striving to persuade you to cast out everything offensive to His holiness; that He may cleanse the temple of your nature, and make it a fit habitation of God through the Spirit.

Is there no material in the universe less offensive to his purity on which He may exert his power and show forth his glory? May He not find some sphere for his mighty energy more congenial to his Holy Nature? Yea, doubtless, a thousand sources are open to him; the universe presents innumerable objects which He may refine, purify, elevate and glorify. But here lies the wonder that He should have selected you and me, and the race to which we belong; not shunning the vilest, the most deeply sunken, for the exercise of

his benevolent energy, and so reveal the greatness of his condescending love.

You admire a philanthropist like Howard, who spends an ample fortune in relieving the miseries of the race, who makes himself familiar with the abodes of guilt and shame, explores dungeons where pestilence rages, cells where criminals groan; who threads his way through lanes and alleys up the creaking stairs, where vice consumes its victims or squalid wretchedness lies friendless on a pallet of straw, or some dying one is tossed and tortured by fatal disease. You admire the self-sacrificing Christian missionary, who leaves friends and home with all the advantages of civilisation, comfort and affection; to contend with gigantic systems of cruelty, to dwell among the barbarous and savage whose crimes are enough to make modesty blush and humanity bleed. And shall we not admire and adore the love of the Holy Spirit, who comes into immediate contact with human hearts, more pestilential than the fever-ward, more offensive than the culprit's cell, and more repulsive than the wretched homes of destitution and vice, and all for the purpose of uplifting and purifying them and so make them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?

If, in order to make this transformation *possible*, Jesus Christ had to move among men filled and

fired with subtle, intense hatred, and expose Himself to the outbursts of their malignant passions, and ultimately die the most cruel and shameful death of the Cross, we must remember, that in order to make the transformation an *accomplished fact*, the Holy Spirit has to enter the hearts where dwell these fierce passions, and contend and struggle with them in the very home where they reign supreme. If it may be said that Jesus Christ descended into hell, may not the same be said with equal truth of the Holy Spirit, when he enters into unrenewed hearts, and there contends with demon powers and struggles with base foul passions, which give fervour to the flame and venom to the stings of hell?

You have been repeatedly urged by the love of Christ to yield yourself to God. By his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, you have been challenged to repentance and faith; but we urge you now by another motive, perhaps less familiar and less common, even by the love of the Holy Spirit. He has often come in contact with the passions and dispositions of your alienated nature. You have felt many unaccountable impulses; the strivings and heavings of a disquieted soul, urging you to throw off the cursed slavery of sin, and seek instantly forgiveness from the God you have offended. Not one of you dare assert that, from your youth up, you have been let alone by

God. Amid the busy life of commerce in the city, beneath the galling pressure of sorrow, under the faithful preaching of the gospel, you have felt a power which seemed for the moment to strain, yea almost to snap every cord which bound you to the practice of evil. At that moment, it only required one bold step on your part in order to land you on a high career for immortality. The man is not living who has never resisted an admonition, never stifled conviction, never felt the working of a power which strove to arrest him in his impiety, and to turn him to better doings and better hopes. If I could take pew by pew, and press home the question on every individual in this assembly,—Hast thou been unmolested in thy sin, let alone by God to follow without misgiving a course of transgression? If we could gain a true honest answer, we are persuaded that there would be wrung from everyone the confession, that it is in spite of repeated remonstrances and warnings that you still hold on in the pathway of error and sin. We beseech you therefore, brethren, by the love of the Spirit, yield yourselves fully for ever, and now, to God. He has tarried long with some of you. Tax not his patience any more. His forbearance although divine has its limits; there is a point when it will bear no more, and that point may now well-nigh be reached.

THE RIGHTEOUS FATHER REVEALED BY CHRIST

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy Name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.—JOHN xvii. 25, 26.

THESE great words form a part of the High Priestly prayer of our Divine Lord offered immediately before his Gethsemane agony. The fact that they are the closing words of that wonderful prayer invests them with profound and solemn meaning. This great prayer differs materially from that which is commonly known as the Lord's Prayer in Matthew v. *That* was intended as a model of prayer for his disciples throughout all ages; *this* is our Lord's own sacerdotal prayer. *That* may be used by the disciples in any age; *this* could only be used by the Divine Man, and by Him only once in the world's history. *That* is the petition of a dependent suppliant; *this* is the communion of an Equal. *That* is the language of transgressors who had sins

to be forgiven; *this* is the language of Him who knew no sin, and who alone had power and authority to forgive sinful men. The opening words of this prayer could be used only by our Divine Redeemer; and the closing words by Him only at this great crisis in His redeeming work.

It is said of Spener, the founder of the sect of the Pietists in the Lutheran Church, himself a prince of preachers, and often called to preach before monarchs and princes in the Courts of Europe, that he felt he never dared to preach on this chapter. It seemed too awfully profound to attempt an exposition; but for private devotion and reading it was his choicest portion. The evening before his death he caused it to be read to him three times in succession. John Knox also in his last illness directed his wife and his secretary that one of them should read in a distinct voice this chapter to him every day. This was done, much to his comfort and profit. My heart is in sympathy with these holy men of God. In taking our text from this sacerdotal prayer we cannot but feel that we are standing on very holy ground, hallowed by the tears and blood of the world's Redeemer. The prayer seems to carry us within the veil, into the Holy of Holies, within hearing of our Great High Priest as He maketh intercession in his Father's presence, and pours out his heart in supplication for Himself, for

his disciples, and for all who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting (vers. 24–26).

I. OUR LORD ANNOUNCES HIMSELF AS THE REVEALER OF THE DIVINE NAME. I have declared, or made known unto them thy Name, and will make it known.

The prayer opens with the reverent, affectionate term Father, which term is employed four times in the prayer. In verse 11 we have the additional term 'Holy Father,' and in our text, 'Righteous Father.' The phrase Righteous Father used here on this special occasion is unique, significant and suggestive. We have no record of Christ employing it on any other occasion. We have no record of any disciple or of any apostle addressing God by the Name, Righteous Father. It stands alone in this High Priestly prayer.

O! Righteous Father. Some modern writers and preachers tell us that the chief mission of Christ as Teacher, was to reveal to a sinful world the universal Fatherhood of God. The guilty fears of men are soothed and dispelled by the announcement that God is the tender loving Father of all men; as if God were like an over-indulgent father, too feeble, too irresolute to punish transgression. But these teachers forget or neglect to tell us that Jesus revealed also the fatherhood of the devil; and

that even the devil has his children among the sons of men. 'Ye are of your father the devil and ye do the deeds of your father.' To whom did He say this? To the Pharisees, who, ceremonially and professedly, were the most religious people in the land. They claimed to be the children of Abraham; and so they were according to the flesh, but not according to the spirit. Christ rent the deceitful veil and refused to admit their claim. 'If ye were Abraham's children ye would do the works of Abraham.' You go about to kill me, a man who hath told you the truth, and because I declare to you an unpalatable truth you seek to kill me. So did not Abraham. Then they claimed God as their Father. We are not born of fornication; we have one Father even God. Christ refused to admit this claim also. If God were your Father, ye would love me. Instead of which, you both hate me and my Father, for I and my Father are one. 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.' Our Lord makes a distinction between the good man and the evil man. He nowhere teaches that all men irrespective of moral character are the children of God. He speaks of the Father only to his disciples. It was to the disciples he said, 'When ye pray, say ye, Our

Father which art in heaven.' He never put the word Father into the lips of the rebellious, the alien, the evil. Only those who have been renewed after God, into whom the life of God has been infused in the regeneration, and who have become partakers of the Divine nature—only these have the right to address Him as Our Father. And it is to these he specially refers when he says, verse 24, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." He no longer says I pray, but 'I will.' The expression is nowhere else found on the lips of Jesus. It has reference to the character of the position he now occupied. It is the saying of a dying man. 'It is truly His Testament which Jesus deposits in His Father's hands.' As if he said, Father, My last Will and Testament is that these my disciples be glorified with me for ever. But this transporting of a Church of sinners with Himself to a throne of glory, must be done in harmony with the righteousness of God. If God forgives transgressors, and forbears punishing the guilty, he must do it righteously. For God as Father is not merely love, but love founded on perfect rectitude. His throne is the mercy-seat, but it is mercy based on righteousness. But cannot God as loving Father forgive by way of sovereign prerogative, and admit all men into

heaven without the atoning sacrifice of the Cross? No. Not and maintain the righteousness of his character, the integrity of his government, and the majesty of his Law. 'Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness' (Ps. xi.). There is something God loves more than He loves you. He loves righteousness more than He loves us men. With an infinite compassion He yearns for your salvation and everlasting blessedness; but there is something of far greater importance to God, and to the universe, than the happiness of the human race. The maintenance of his righteous character is infinitely more important than our blessedness. Better, infinitely better that the race should righteously perish, than that God should save them unrighteously. Better that all men should suffer the just penalty of their sins for ever, than that God should save one of them unjustly. Mercy could not come to men as trangressors except by the way of righteousness. For God to show mercy to the guilty in an unrighteous way—*that* would be for God to sin, for all unrighteousness is sin. This explains to us why our Lord at this solemn crisis looks upon the sterner aspect of the Divine Fatherhood, and addresses God as the Righteous Father. It is my Will that these my disciples

should have eternal life, but they have sinned, violated law condemns them. The sentence is gone forth that they must die, that sentence cannot be repealed. In infinite compassion, I volunteer to become the sinner's Substitute, and to receive in my own person the death-sentence, so that these my disciples, and all who believe in me, may have eternal life; not in defiance of law and equity, but with the full approval of the holiness and righteousness of God. 'The world hath not known thee.' The hideous forms of heathen divinities, the base attributes of cruelty and criminality with which they are invested; the foul abominations, the degrading vices practised by devotees within the precincts of their temples, in connection with their worship and under the sanction of their gods, supplied daily proof that they had not known the Righteous Father. In its most refined form, as in Greece, heathenism inscribed on its altars 'To the unknown God.' In our own day, although living in the light of the fuller revelation of the gospel, we have a school of philosophy whose first principle is, that God is unknowable. Around us are multitudes who know not the enormity of the evil of sin, or the infinite cost it was to God to provide redemption, and who therefore withhold from God the love, the service, and the obedience He claims. Of these the solemn declaration of Christ is as true as when

it was first uttered,—'the world hath not known thee.'

'But I have known thee.' David dreaded feasting at Saul's table because he feared that Saul cherished in his heart some evil purpose against him. Jonathan, loath to believe that his father had thoughts of vengeance, advised David to stay away for a few days from the king's table, that he might have the opportunity of ascertaining the state of Saul's mind towards David. The Only Begotten Son had no need to say to the world of men, Tarry awhile, until I search and ascertain whether there be evil in my Father's heart towards you. He might rather say, I dwelt in the bosom of the Father before all worlds, and am acquainted with all the secrets of his heart. In the distant eternity my Father loved the human race, and when lost, resolved to redeem them. I saw his heart moved with infinite pity to suffering sinners; and, yearning to send them help and deliverance, with all the pathos of love He sent forth the appeal, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? My heart, moved to its depths in sympathy with his, instantly responded, Behold, here am I, send me. And now, in the fulness of the time, I came from the Father, to testify that this is the will of him that sent me, 'that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.'

'These (my disciples) have known that thou hast sent me.' They know that I am divinely commissioned, they receive me as their long-expected and promised Messiah; but they know not the depth, the fulness of meaning in that Messiahship. There are letters in the Divine Name which they have not yet deciphered. When he showed 'his disciples, how that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things, and be killed, and be raised again the third day,' Peter took him and even rebuked him for entertaining the thought, saying, 'Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee' (Matt. xvi. 21, 22). Indicating, that neither Peter, nor the other disciples, had fully apprehended the sacrificial mission of Christ. Even after his resurrection when on the way to Emmaus; he explained to his companions, how Moses, the prophets and psalmists, had declared that Christ must needs suffer death and enter into his glory; he reproved them because they were slow of heart to believe, and dull to understand the deeper meaning of his teaching about his atoning work. 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory' (Luke xxiv. 26).

'I have made known unto them thy Name.' Throughout his three years' ministry, by his words and works, he had been educating them in the knowledge of the Righteous Father. In his dis-

course to Nicodemus he revealed both the love and the righteousness of God. 'God so loved the world,' etc. Love originating, devising, completing the scheme of human redemption is clearly announced in that great passage; but I hear the footsteps of a God of righteousness, the echoes of doom are in it as well—'that whosoever believeth on him might not perish.' Yes, there was perishing somewhere for humanity had not the Son of God interposed; and there is perishing still awaiting the rejecters of the Only Begotten.

'And will make it known.' Hitherto he had revealed the Righteous Father by his teaching; but now he is going to reveal him by an act of self-sacrifice. Gethsemane is within sight; the brook Kedron is about to be crossed; the garden of the agony entered; and there a new startling event is to take place, such as the universe never witnessed before; Innocence in agony; the Holy One enduring pangs which reveal themselves in the bloody sweat. What can be the meaning of this tragedy? The Divine Sufferer withdrew a stone's throw from his disciples. Who threw that stone? Was it an arm of flesh or was it the Almighty Arm of God? The distance between Christ and his disciples at that moment cannot be measured. It was not a span; the moral distance was infinite. The disciples had no conception of the awful mystery of that solitude

when the Son of his Love was alone with the Righteous Father. What transpired we cannot tell. Was it then that He bore our griefs, that He carried our sorrows, that He was stricken of God and afflicted? Was it then that the Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all? Was it then that it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, to put Him to grief? Was it then that Zechariah's prediction was fulfilled? "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow, smite the shepherd." Was it then that He was wounded for our transgression and made a curse for us? This we know; it was then that the bitter wail ascended from the depth of his spirit, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. It was then that the prayer quivered on his lips, O Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me. In Gethsemane He declared the Righteous Father.

Calvary is also looming into view; the altar of sacrifice is in the near future; He himself is the sacrifice: the world's atonement is about to be offered, and He himself is that atonement. On the Cross we have Righteousness demanding a sacrifice and Love giving it. Love offering an Atonement and Righteousness accepting it. Both embracing each other over the Divine Sacrifice, and both rejoicing together over the sinner who comes to find shelter under the shadow of the great Propitiation. In the redeeming Christ the wisdom of God is

revealed. In Christ, God can forgive the guilty and avert punishment from the transgressor and yet be righteous: a just God and yet a Saviour. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God (Rom. iii. 24–26).

II. The Purpose for which Christ Jesus revealed the Divine Name. 'That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.'

Christ yearns to be loved by the disciples whom He has redeemed. To each one he puts the searching question, 'Lovest thou me?' No human friend can appreciate pure affection more than Christ. The measure of his demand is exceeding great. He covets to be loved by us in the same degree as he is loved by the Divine Father. How is this possible? You may institute a comparison between one finite and another finite, however great the disparity:—between an atom and the whole material universe; between a drop of water and the wide measureless ocean; between a solitary ray of light and the sum total of light in the sun; you may form an idea of the insignificance of the one from the magnitude of the other; but comparison between finite and infinite is not possible. Here, comparison is lost in contrast;

and yet, our Lord, in this great prayer, gives utterance to the strange yearning, that his disciples should love him as the Father has loved him; as if his great heart of infinite love could not be satisfied with anything less than that our love should come up to the full measure of the Divine Father's love; that we love him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind, that is, to the utmost limit of our loving capacity.

1. The Father's love is *confiding*. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand (John iii. 35). The government of the universe with all its complications, mysteries, perplexities, has been committed to the Son. 'All things are delivered to me of my Father' (Matt. xi. 27). The Father has no shadow of doubt concerning the ability of the Son to carry the infinite trust to a successful issue; no fear lest his Anointed should misdirect this undertaking, or misapply that agency; or fail in the accomplishment of a single purpose; no gloomy forebodings, lest the hostile forces of earth or hell should overthrow or defeat the Prince on whose shoulder He has placed the government.

Here lies the marvel, that while the Father with perfect confidence commits to his Son the universe of worlds with their diversified and infinite cares, yet, you hesitate to cast upon him your little burden of personal cares, and sometimes even question

whether that little would not be safer in your own hands than in his. The Father's implicit confidence rebukes our distrust. Those consuming solicitudes concerning things seen; those corroding anxieties about the future; those selfish tears shed over thwarted schemes are so many witnesses that you have yet to learn the blessed lesson of loving trustfulness, and that the Mediator's great prayer has yet to be answered in you—'That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them.'

The Father revealed his love by committing to the Son the greatest of all missions, even *the redemption of a lost world.* If through unfaithfulness the Son swerves in any degree from the original plan; if through fear he shrinks from encountering the hostilities in the way; if through failure of love he hesitates to make the sacrifice and declines the Cross and the grave; no mind can conceive the extent of the catastrophe; God would be dishonoured, heaven would be emptied of its human population, its gates for ever barred against every member of the sinning race, Satan would reign triumphant on earth as in hell. And yet knowing, as no one else could know, that the issues were so vast, so momentous, and eternal, the Father committed all to the Son without the shadow of perturbation.

And yet, here are we poor and trembling, often doubting whether Christ can or will save us to the

end, wounding him by our unbelief, grieving him by our hesitation to cast ourselves fully on his all-sufficiency. By committing you to the Son of his Love Has the Father committed you to One disqualified for the task; or incompetent to keep the sacred trust? Have you not the assurance that He is able to save to the uttermost? Are you not cheered into confidence by the declaration of the Son Himself? 'And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.' If the Father could commit to Him the work of the world's redemption, surely you need not hesitate to commit to him the keeping of your soul. If the Father could trust him with that which is greatest, you may safely trust Him with that which is least; and so give some humble proof that the love wherewith the Father loved him, dwells also in you.

2. The Father's love was *communicative*. 'The Father loveth the Son and sheweth him all things that Himself doeth' (John v. 20). The Divine Son is admitted into all the secrets of the Divine council. Many things made known to prophets and apostles were hidden from the unthinking multitude. Philosophers and scientists have mastered mysteries which remain unsolved problems to the common people. But from philosophers, scientists, apostles, prophets,

yea, from angels also, many of the ways and purposes of God are still concealed. To all his creatures, He sometimes dwells in the thick darkness; but from the Son nothing is hid. He dwells with the Father in eternal light and is Himself the Light.

True love is communicative, ever ready to disclose its fears and hopes, its joys and sorrows to its beloved. Christ demands the openness and candour of genuine love from all his disciples. The existence of a cold reserve, or a secret desire to keep thoughts and feelings hidden from Christ, is a sure indication that you have not yet reached that standard of love for which your Lord yearns. He wants a love that will banish all reserve, and establish the most perfect freedom between you and Himself.

3. The Father's love was distinguished for its *Constancy*. Other loves were changeable. Christ's deepest wounds were received in the house of his friends; his keenest anguish came from unfaithful disciples. The denial of Peter went deeper into his heart than the spear; the infamous betrayer's kiss was rougher than the nails; the doubts of Thomas were more piercing than the thorns. If Peter's love lost its ardour; if Judas' love was quenched for ever; if for want of love, disciples slumbered and slept in the presence of his agony; if through fear friends forsook him and fled; if the love of the holy women, last at the Cross and first at the sepulchre,

did not always burn with equal ardour; there was One whose affection knew neither abatement nor change. The Father loved the Son from before the foundation of the world and he loved him to the end.

Jesus Christ longs for a love like this in all his disciples, in you and in me. He yearns for it, he prays for it. Your wayward, fitful, half-hearted love grieves him, dishonours him. He mourns over your coldness, and longs to feel the warmth of a mightier flame.

4. The Father's love to the Son was a love of *complacency*, of holy delight, of unqualified approval. It had been all this from the beginning throughout the past eternities; but, in some mysterious sense, that love always infinite, was increased, intensified when the Son consented to die for us sinners. 'Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.' The self-devotion of the Son in consenting to give his life was infinitely pleasing to the Father. The Father loved the Son all the more, with a special love, for this voluntary sacrifice for the redemption of the human race. Twice during his redeeming career the Father proclaims over him the approving word,—'This is my beloved Son.' If the Father loves the Son so much the more because he died to redeem us, how much more should we love Christ, seeing that for us he

died; that we might not perish, but have eternal life. If at an infinite cost, Jesus Christ opened a channel for mercy to flow down to us under condemnation, should not our heart respond,

> Love so amazing so divine
> Demands my soul, my life, my all.

One more last word, 'I in them.' Summed up in these last emphatic words you have the final purpose of this great Mediatorial prayer. He is going away and yet He abides with them. His bodily presence passes into the unseen, His Spiritual Presence remains for ever. His human Form enters within the veil, His Divine Power, his Spirit is felt as life and strength within. Having known Christ after the flesh, now they know Him so no more, but they know Him as the indwelling Christ; they are new creatures, with Christ formed in their hearts.

Has this last yearning of the Redeemer's soul on the eve of his agony been realised in you? Bring your love to this test. Strive to obtain a worthy conception of the Father's love to the Son in its height, depth, intensity and constancy, and then judge yourself by this lofty standard. Has He seen of the travail of his soul accomplished in you? Have you given Him that measure of love that satisfies his demand and that is commensurate with his prayer? If on an honest scrutiny of your heart you discover

that you are far short of conformity to his ideal, then humbled and ashamed of your coldness, with all your soul breathe to heaven the prayer—

> Kindle a flame of sacred love
> On the mean altar of my heart!
> There let it for thy glory burn
> With inextinguishable blaze.

THE SONS OF GOD REVEALED

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.—Rom. viii. 19.

SAINT PAUL had a method of his own to comfort the persecuted and bereaved saints, whom he addressed in his letters. When we have bereaved mourners to soothe and solace, we invariably direct their thoughts to the blessedness attained by the saintly soul immediately on its departure from the body. Not so the Apostle Paul. He bridged over the intermediate state, and landed himself and his bereaved friends on the other side of the grave, when emptied of its sacred human dust by the Resurrection and the Life. When the Church in Thessalonica, largely made up of his own converts, mourned the loss of beloved ones, and sorely needing spiritual consolation, Paul writes to them his words of tender sympathy, "Comfort one another with these words." What words? They are words which make mention of the trump of the archangel, of the coming of the Judge in the clouds of heaven with his august equipage, of the opening of the graves, of the resurrection

of the dead, and of the living suddenly caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Strange words these wherewith to comfort souls bereaved of their dearest ones! And yet, they are the words with which Paul comforts the sorrowing Thessalonians. While holding firmly to the doctrine of the soul's entrance into blessedness at the moment of dissolution, yet, in the immediate prospect of his own martyrdom, his chief comfort was derived from the certain hope of the resurrection, when body and soul, reunited, should be glorified together. 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing.' The crown was 'laid up' until 'that day.' What day? Not the day of death, but the coronation day of all the saints, when the body, quickened and immortalised, shall share with the soul the crowning glory. The prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus, for which he pressed forward, was nothing short of the resurrection. 'If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.' So in this chapter, Paul is addressing saints, who, in common with himself, were suffering cruel persecution, and even liable to death for the truth. 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' He reminds them that in all their persecutions the body

is the chief sufferer. It is the body that is bruised, broken, bound, imprisoned and put to death. The persecutor cannot touch the soul. Whatever cruelties or injuries he may inflict on the bodily frame, they are of no account when compared with the glory that shall be revealed *in us*—not to us—but IN US, that is, in the body of the resurrection. Paul reminds them how infinitely that glory will exceed their earthly sorrows, and how it will outweigh beyond all reckoning the sufferings of the present life. Paul was a realist by virtue of his strong faith, which made the invisible visible, the distant near. With the eye of faith he saw, with the hand of faith he grasped the spiritual, the eternal, so that they became realities felt and enjoyed (vers. 18, 19).

If the persecutor, in his cruelty, stop short of martyrdom, death is still the ultimate doom of the body. Die it must by the ordinary course of decay or disease. For the body was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of God, who hath subjected the same in hope. When subject to death as the penalty of transgression, the body is not hopeless even in its degradation, for it hopefully waits. Nor shall it hope in vain. For the body itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Paul goes further still, and speaks as if he heard the dead of all past ages, sending forth one

universal groan, travailing in pain together under the penalty of death and corruption. Not only do the countless generations that are dead groan, but we, who are still living in the flesh and suffering, groan within ourselves. The saints already dead groan within the bowels of the earth, whereas we, the living persecuted ones, groan within ourselves, but having the first-fruits of the spirit in the possession of the gospel hope, we soothe the pain and moderate the groaning by hopefully and confidently waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.

The difficulty which some commentators find in this passage centres in the word "creature" which occurs four times in the paragraph. Without entering into the perplexing controversy, we shall content ourselves by understanding the word, in all the four verses, to mean the body, the human body. If, in reading the paragraph, you will substitute in each case the word 'body' for the word 'creature,' much of the mystery seems to me to vanish (read vers. 18–23).

There are fewer difficulties in connection with this interpretation of the word than with any other. It brings the passage into harmony with Paul's usual method of administering consolation to suffering and persecuted saints. It is also in keeping with the teaching of verse 23, where Paul tells us distinctly, that the ultimate good for which he, and his fellow-sufferers in Rome are waiting and groaning, is the

redemption of the body. 'Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.'

The learned authorities who give a wider meaning to the word 'creature,' and who hold that it comprehends both the inanimate and irrational creation, even they admit, that whatever interpretation you place on the word, it must include, and does include, the human body and its resurrection. We shall not therefore err from the truth if in our remarks we for the present limit its application to the body of our humiliation.

Our text intimates, *that at some future period in the history of the human race, there will be a public manifestation of the sons of God.*

I. When

shall this revelation take place?

The Bible teaches, that, at the close of this dispensation of grace, there will be a gathering together of the whole human race, of all the ages, of all the nations, of all the countries on the face of the earth. Such a gathering has never taken place before, and will never take place again. Once only in the history of the universe will it occur. If on that day you were permitted to traverse the universe, to visit earth, heaven, hell, and the innumerable worlds in space, you would not find a

single human being wandering alone in the solitudes of immensity outside this universal gathering. All are present here, not one is wanting. They will never meet again. They are to be divided into two classes, with an impassable gulf fixed between them for ever (Matt. xxv. 31, 34, 41).

The great question which is of infinite and eternal concern to you and me is—Where shall I be? Where shall you be on that day of separation, on which side of the dividing line, of the awful chasm which can never be bridged? That solemn period is emphasised as "that day," "that great day," "the day of God," "the day of the Lord," "the day of his wrath." It will be emphatically a day of manifestation; the manifestation of Christ in his glory as the universal Judge, of the unforgiven sins of men (forgiven sins will be blotted out, cancelled); of the long-delayed punishment of transgressors; of the righteousness of God in the fearful penalties inflicted on impenitent men; but, it will also be a day of the manifestation of the sons of God.

II. What

will be the nature of the manifestation?

1. It will then be revealed—*Who* are the sons of God. A line, definite and distinct, divides even now on earth the sons from those who are not sons, but that dividing line is visible only to God. There

may be two in that pew sitting side by side, touching each other elbow to elbow, the one a son of God by the adoption of grace, the other not a son, an alien, an enemy, and yet, the man with keenest insight, cannot now distinguish and pronounce definitely and infallibly, which is the son, and which is not; but God who reads the heart discerns the distinction with perfect accuracy even now. In the day of manifestation, it shall be revealed to a witnessing universe, who are the children of God and who are not. "Then shall ye discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

2. In that day there will be a revelation of *What* they are, as well as, Who they are. In the present state we see only what is external, the actions, the conduct; but these do not constitute character; they may sometimes help you to form a fairly correct idea of the character, but you may be deceived. The man may not be after all what he seems. Character is inward, it strikes its roots invisibly into the depths of our being, and consists of disposition, motives, principles, passions, thoughts. 'As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.' In the revealing day, the manifestation will be, not of what they seem to men, but of what they are in the sight of God.

You may report in detail amounts contributed to

Missionary, Bible and other evangelical societies, from the brass coin to the thousand pounds; but you cannot tabulate the love, the self-denial, the self-sacrifice, which marked the one gift, but which did not characterise the other. A good act may spring from a bad motive, but the bad motive makes the act itself bad. You may give liberally to a good and noble object, and men, who look only at what the hand gives, may call you benevolent, but if you give simply to avoid a reputation for meanness; or, to be praised of men; or, to secure in your business the patronage of the friends of the society, God denounces it as selfishness. Men are not always what they seem. Some seek of a purpose to deceive; study and strive to appear what they know they are not. In the day of manifestation, they will be stripped of everything adventitious, of every cloak that conceals realities, and character will stand forth in all its native simplicity in the light of God.

We have prominent workers, devoting themselves with self-denying zeal to the activities of the church. Their brethren do right when they gratefully recognise the service thus rendered, for they deserve it. But there are other excellences, which the world takes no account of, but which God highly values. The patient endurance, the peaceful trust, the hopeful waiting, the silent praise of the heart, the calm joy of the languishing sufferer in the

kingdom of patience,—these are seen and known only to a few loved ones, and to them, only in part and imperfectly; but in that day, these moral beauties will be revealed in all their loveliness, through whatever form the spirit may assume.

You may report your church members in the order of their seniority, but not in the order of their moral excellence as they stand in God's sight. In the day of manifestation, they will be exhibited in the order of their sanctity, not as they stand in church records; then, it will be seen that in some cases the earthly order is reversed, that the first is last, and the last first, to the dismay of some, and to the astonishment of all.

Some saintly ones have reason to complain here that they are misunderstood, misrepresented, their actions and words are wrongly interpreted; malice puts on its colouring, envy reads the character through a jaundiced vision; but in that day, you will not be misrepresented. Your character will be revealed in its fulness and truthfulness, not a false hue in your history, not a false light, nor a false shade on any part of the character. If then you have the joy to belong to Christ, and to be his workmanship, it will be his joy to exhibit the gracious work He has wrought within. The king's daughter will be all glorious within, and having given his last finishing touch, He will make manifest these inward

moral glories, and will summon the intelligent universe to behold them, "when He comes to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

3. The sons of God will be revealed in all their *completeness.* We know very little of the history of the spirit disembodied from the moment of death to the morning of the resurrection; but it will not be a condition where the grace of hope is not needed. We sometimes speak as if the soul in heaven will need neither hope nor faith, as if both these graces ceased the moment death is passed. This does not seem to me a correct view of the intermediate state. The disembodied soul in heaven will be a bereaved, a widowed personality until the resurrection. Severed from the bodily partner, with which it has been associated in sorrow and in joy, throughout the whole of its earthly life, the lone spirit will not only long, but also believe and hope for the reunion. Its bliss will be completed, its glory consummated, only when that reunion is effected. Until then, the spirits of the holy dead, as if somewhat impatient with the long delay, and weary of the prolonged widowhood, cry beneath the altar—"How long, O Lord, holy and true, How long?" The reply is very emphatic—They must rest or wait for a little season until the number of their fellow-servants shall be fulfilled (Rev. vi. 10, 11).

III. WHY

wait until the resurrection for the manifestation of the sons of God?

The covenant of redemption into which the Son of God entered with the Divine Father, included definitely three things:—the salvation of every believing soul from all sin; the salvation of the body from the corruption of the grave; the reunion of the soul with its identical body when raised incorruptible and deathless. This is repeatedly affirmed, and pledged in covenant, by Jesus Christ to every one that believeth (John vi. 39, 40, 44).

In the intermediate state between death and the resurrection, the saints will only be vestiges of their former selves, only fragments of what they were, and fragments only of what they are destined to be. Only half their humanity, the soul alone will be in conscious bliss, the other half will be in the sleep of death, the unconsciousness of the grave. But not for ever will this be its doom, for the body itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (ver. 21). The earth everywhere—in graveyards, in catacombs, in battlefields, in the depth of ocean—everywhere the earth is stored with the precious dust of God's redeemed ones; and as it rolls on burdened with its sacred treasure, the earth groans to be delivered, as if longing to give birth and

freedom to the bodies it has so long held in unwilling bondage. If in their longing for the resurrection, the souls beneath the altar cry, How long? so also the bodies from the grave respond, and echo back the cry of the spirits,—How long, O Lord! How long? I fancy I see them both together, the body from the dust, and the soul from beneath the altar, straining their vision to see if there be any sign in the heavens of the coming of the Son of Man; both of them in listening attitude, bending the ear to catch the first note of the trump of the archangel, heralding the opening of the prison-house of the grave, and the liberation of all its captives. Then, when every saint is perfected, when the Lord Jesus shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, and conform it to the body of his glory, when He shall unite the imperishable body to the spirit to which it belonged, when His redeemed Church in all her completeness, is gathered together, not one member wanting, He will exhibit her to a witnessing universe as the masterpiece of his handiwork, and as the noblest achievement of his infinite love.

The Church thus perfected according to Saint Paul is "the fulness of Christ." 'The Church which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.' This is one of Paul's profound, mysterious, far-reaching thoughts. We can understand how Christ becomes the fulness of the Church, but we are some-

what staggered, perplexed, when he tells us that the Church is the fulness of Christ. What does he mean? What can he mean? The great ultimate purpose of the Incarnation, of the Mediatorial system, was to form a spotless Church from among the children of men, to the praise and glory of God's grace. In the great day for the winding up of the economy of redemption, without this spotless Church, the Redeemer would be incomplete. Is He the *Vine*? He would be incomplete without the branches. Is He the *Head*? He would be incomplete without the members. Is He the *Husband*? He would be incomplete without the bride. Is He the *Foundation*? He would be incomplete without the superstructure. Is He the *Firstfruits*? He would be incomplete without the full harvest. The Church perfected will be his complement, his fulness. In her, He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, so satisfied, that the infinite beauty of her holiness will give him a fulness of joy for evermore.

In another passage, Paul speaks of the Church as God's inheritance. It is great and glorious to have God as our inheritance, but it is greater still, a greater wonder, a greater mystery, that God should count the saints as his inheritance. God sets infinite value on renewed and sanctified men, and counts himself rich in their affection and service. God sees greater glory in believing men renewed after

his image, than in all else in the universe. The Church sanctified will be for ever the wealthiest inheritance of the King of Glory. He will show forth in her the riches of his grace and the riches of his glory. The unsearchable riches of God are seen not in creation, not in the sustentation and control of the universe, but in the saints. Wealth of power may be seen in creation, wealth of wisdom may be seen in the government of the universe, but the wealth of grace can only be seen in the redeemed, when made free from sin and holy like Himself.

When at the first Jehovah founded the earth and beautified it, the morning stars looked down with admiration; when the Eternal Son full of grace and truth left the throne of his glory to tabernacle in humanity, the angels filled the solitudes of space with the rapture 'Glory to God in the highest'; when Christ exhibits the innumerable multitude of redeemed ones, every creature in heaven will admire the perfection of their beauty, and wonder at the efficacy of redeeming grace; the saints themselves, wondering at themselves, and at each other, will joyfully exclaim, "This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes." The vast throng of the redeemed will reverently bow, and fill the universe with the adoring song, Worthy is the Lamb, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people

and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth (Rev. v. 9–10).

IV. Where

will this manifestation take place?

Much has been said and written concerning the locality of the future judgment. Many passages of Holy Scripture indicate that the solemn transactions of that great day will take place somewhere in space, over and above the earth, in the vicinity, and within sight of the world inhabited by man and redeemed by Christ. The sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the heavens; all the tribes of the earth shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 'Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' The Son of Man shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. The new Jerusalem, the Church is described by John as coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Paul also tells us that one of the first acts of that day before the Judge is seated, and before judgment proceeds, will be the raising of all the dead, and together with them, those who are living on the earth will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. These passages, as well as many

others, suggest that the movements of the Son of God, the Judge and his retinue, on that day, will be downwards from heaven, in the direction of earth, and that the great assize will be held in the region of the air and clouds which encompass our earth. This seems to be in perfect harmony with the nature of things and with the reason of things.

1. The Judgment is for man, for the human race. We have no reason to suppose that any other race, or any other order of beings from any other realm, will be finally judged on that day. Is it not in harmony with the nature of things that the entire race of man should be finally judged, if not actually on the earth, yet, within sight of the world where they spent their probation, and where their choice for eternity was made?

2. The redemption of mankind has rendered necessary the day of Judgment. Had man never been redeemed there would be no need of a final judgment to fix his destiny. Retribution, without restraint and without delay, must have fallen on the transgressor. Escape from the penalty would have been impossible. The eternal, irreversible doom would have overtaken him the moment he transgressed. But the promised redemption provided a remedy for sin, a complete deliverance from its power, pollution, guilt and penalties. The righteous retribution was stayed, the penalty

suspended. To man was given a period of probation, when eternal life was revealed and offered, and manifold means and agencies employed to persuade him to lay hold upon the great salvation. The solemn business of the Judgment day will be to ascertain who of us have accepted, and who have rejected the provisions of infinite Love. The penalty falling on the condemned that day will not be penalty for sins committed, so much as for the more awful sin of rejecting the only remedy. 'This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' Does it not seem a fitting thing that the sentence of acquittal on all who believe, and the sentence of condemnation on all who reject, should be pronounced within sight of the world where the one party accepted, and where the other rejected the great redemption?

3. The Redeemer Himself will be the Judge. And as He will have to judge us as to the manner we have treated Him as our only Saviour, where can he find a more fitting place for Him to hold the last Great Assize, than the world where He redeemed us, and where He made salvation and eternal life possible to every man?

There are many spots on earth of special interest to the Lord Jesus, but none more precious than the land of his work and sufferings,—the Bethlehem

of his birth, the Nazareth of his childhood, the Capernaum and Galilee of his ministry, the Tabor of his transfiguration, the Gethsemane of his agony, the Calvary of his death, the garden of his resurrection; and we, somehow, love to think that the vast gathering of his redeemed ones will be presented to the Father within sight of the garden of the agony and of the hill of crucifixion.

When Jesus Christ completed his sacrificial work on earth he said, "It is finished"; and the Divine Father responded, and expressed his approval, "This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." At the close of this dispensation of grace, when the Holy Spirit shall have fulfilled his mission, and all are saved who will to be saved, the Spirit will gather together his sanctified Church, and, presenting them to the Son for his acceptance, will say, I have fulfilled my mission on all these by making them holy, there is nothing remaining in them that needs my cleansing. It is finished. The Son in accepting them will say, I am satisfied. Although He may satisfy others, He will not finish his work until He himself is satisfied, and He himself will be satisfied only when He can say to his Church, "Behold thou art fair, my Beloved, thou art without spot or wrinkle."

Saint Paul speaks of Christ presenting the Church to Himself, and when doing so, He will not say, as

men often say when receiving presentations, I did not expect it, "I do not deserve it; but Christ will rather say, I did expect it, I lived for it, I agonised for it in yonder garden; I bled and died for it on yonder Golgotha, I struggled with death in yonder rocky grave, and rose triumphant, bursting the bands of death and the great seal of Roman authority, in order to secure this result. The confident anticipation of this great consummation, seen to-day in my redeemed Church, was ever present with me, sustaining me in my agony, cheering me on the Cross, it was the joy set before me when dying. I foresaw this result of the travail of my soul, and now, I realise it, and I am satisfied." Then taking the whole multitude of the saved, He will present them to His Father saying, "Behold here am I and the children thou hast given me; and of all thou hast given me I have lost none. They are all here, and not one is wanting, and there is nothing in them now to require my intercession." The Father will receive them with joy, and, looking them through and through, will proclaim in the presence of all onlookers, "They are without fault before the throne of God." Then turning to his redeemed ones the Son will say, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

THE SPIRIT-LAMP

The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord (R.V.).—PROVERBS xx. 27.

MAN is a complex, compound, mysterious being, possessing a threefold nature,—Body, Mind, Spirit—these three, the greatest of these is the spirit. The *body* demands light, air, food, clothing, a habitation to dwell in. The *mind* is the thinking, the reasoning power, with this he acquires knowledge of men, of things, of the universe, of its laws and forces. The *spirit* is the religious, the worshipping part of his nature. This renders him capable of receiving God, of enjoying God, of communing with God and of resembling God. "There is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." God may pass through a rock, but that rock cannot be inspired for it has no spirit. God may pass through the animal, but the animal cannot be inspired, for it has no spiritual nature. It would be out of place and unnatural to speak of an inspired dog or an inspired horse; but man, in the possession of spirit, may be conscious of the incoming,

the indwelling of the Spirit of God. That Divine Spirit can and does occasionally communicate to the human spirit thoughts and feelings that can only find full expression in exclaiming with Paul "whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth."

Our text asserts that the spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah. The phrase is strong and emphatic. It is not that the Lord has put a lamp in the spirit of man; it is much more than that; the spirit itself is the lamp. The office of the lamp is to give light. Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet. The spirit of man is a lamp, a torch, a lighthouse, planted in the centre of the temple of his nature, shedding its sacred light upon the inmost abysses of his being, "searching all the inward parts of the belly." The phrase 'belly' refers not to our physical nature, but to the profound depths of our moral being. This inward lamp enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. The multitudes of our race destitute of the written revelation have nevertheless this inward revelation. The human spirit intuitively, instinctively apprehends certain great spiritual truths without reasoning upon them. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their

conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." The human spirit is a revelation from God and is itself a Divine Scripture as sacred as the written Word itself. It may be darkened by the mist and miasma arising from the corruptions of our nature, so also may the written revelation be perverted and beclouded by ignorance, prejudice, by selfish passions and unbelief, but this inward lamp is extinguished in none, not even in the most savage or debased of the human race. Under every possible condition of life, the spirit of man witnesses, with voices more or less distinct, to certain great fundamental verities relating to both God and Man. On the present occasion we shall limit ourselves to the four following—

I. GOD.
II. RELIGION.
III. IMMORTALITY.
IV. RESPONSIBILITY.

I. All men everywhere have an inward intuitive sense of GOD.

Account for it as you please the fact cannot now be questioned that no tribe, no class of people have ever been found wholly destitute of the conception of God, of the Supernatural, of a Personal Being beyond, above and superior to themselves. The most barbarous and savage people space with ghosts,

spectres, invisible powers or beings; some malignant, others benevolent; some dwell in storms, others in sunshine; some in thunder, others in the solitudes of the hills; some on the earth and under the earth, others in sea and sky.

We know that some of the earlier missionaries after a few months' residence among native savages in the interior of Africa wrote home to the Societies to which they respectively belonged stating that they had met with tribes of men without a notion of God or of worship, without temples, without altars, without priests. But presently, after a year's residence among the people, a fearful plague broke forth among the cattle which perished by thousands. The natives were alarmed and reproached themselves with having neglected their gods and their religion, and openly confessed that the terrible judgment which had befallen them was conclusive evidence that their gods were angry, and resolved to punish. Terror-stricken, they at once repaired to witches, wizards, necromancers, confessing their sins, and entreating them to intercede with the great spirits on their behalf. These wizards and witches were sacred persons and fulfilled the functions of priesthood. They were supposed to have fellowship with and influence over the gods whose displeasure had been kindled. Nor did the people forget to bring their sacrifices to pacify their avenging deities. This

proved to the missionaries that, debased and degraded as the people had become, they were not destitute of the idea of God or of the worship due to Him. The first impressions were corrected by the missionaries in their home communications, and subsequently in their addresses on the platform after returning to their country. When the savages returned to their religious rites under the influence of fear they strikingly verified the language of Isaiah "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." The heathen mariners who sailed with Jonah were terrified with the storm, and immediately every man cried unto his god. Persuaded that some culprit on board had angered the gods and caused the tempest, they were not satisfied until they cast lots and found the guilty one and then cast him overboard. Explorers of distant regions have told us of tribes without an idea of religion or the supernatural, but the opinion was formed hastily and with only a superficial and brief acquaintance with the habits of the people; for when subsequent travellers visited the same people they were found devoutly observing religious rites and ceremonies simply because they had been alarmed by a visitation of plague, or pestilence, or war, or famine, or a thunderstorm, and which had driven them to their gods whose anger they sought to pacify by intercessions and sacrifices.

So that we have no satisfactory conclusive evidence of any people having been found on the face of the earth wholly destitute of every idea of the supernatural. We may take it as a fairly well-established truth that conscience in man, in every man, is a witness for God, and that the spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah.

Let us go back in thought to the beginning. How did Adam when created become possessed of the idea of God? Think of the mode of his creation. The body is first made of clay. There it lies shaped, beautiful, symmetrical, with all its functions complete and ready for action, but lifeless, nothing more than a statue of dead clay. It has eyes but cannot see; feet, but it cannot walk; tongue, but it cannot speak; lungs, but it cannot breathe; heart, but it cannot throb. God stands over that clay and breathes into it his own Life—Himself. By this in-breathing three things entered into that human form —Life, Mind, Spirit. Man became a living soul, made after God's moral likeness and possessed of the life of God. The soul thus inbreathed was not in a state of infancy or childhood. Man stood forth in the full maturity of manhood, not in body only, but also in mind and in spirit. Now there are at least two methods by which this new-created man may apprehend the idea of God.

1. Objective. Looking around upon the magnitude, the harmony, the grandeur and the order of all

material things he might argue, reason or infer, that back of all things visible there must be an intelligent, almighty Author, Creator, Builder.

2. Subjective. But in addition to all this—Could not God reveal Himself without a medium, directly to man's spirit, to his inmost consciousness? "If there be a spirit in man" may not the Divine Spirit communicate directly with the human spirit? It was the inbreathing of the Spirit of God that made the clay a man; without that incoming of the breath of God the beautifully fashioned clay would have remained nothing but clay. When man stood forth in the completeness of his manhood—Would not the Divine breathing awaken the consciousness that Divinity had touched him? Would not the intelligent spirit within know whence he came? Surely God would not land man, the appointed sovereign of created things, in the centre of the universe ignorant of his origin, destiny and mission, without an intelligent conception of his Creator and Sovereign Lord? This profound conception of God was inbreathed into the soul's deepest consciousness when first created by the Father of our spirits. The original idea may be darkened, beclouded by the wilfulness of sin, but it is not extinct, not eradicated, for man, as if conscious of his loss still gropes in the darkness feeling after God if haply he may touch him and again behold Him in the brighter light.

We have seen monuments, tablets, tombstones with names, dates, events recorded that were not readable on account of the dust and moss of years which had accumulated and covered the inscription. It is not necessary to engrave the stone afresh, only sweep away the accumulation of years, and you shall know to whose memory that stone was raised. So if you will rub off the incrustations of sin and error gathered over the human soul you will find the Great Name—God—written deep and large in the very depth of the spirit. Just as the flower has an instinctive tendency to turn towards the sun, so man even in his lowest estate has certain instincts which impel him towards God and to cry, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: When shall I come and appear before God?" You possess capacities, you have wants which the Infinite alone can fill and satisfy. Until the God you have lost is restored to his rightful Sovereignty in your heart the deepest cry of your spirit will be, 'O that I knew where I might find him!'

II. RELIGION is another great truth taught instinctively by the spirit of man.

I think it is Dr. Johnson who defines man to be a "Religious Animal." By this we understand him to mean that man possesses a distinctively religious nature, with a capacity for and an instinctive

tendency to worship. The spirit of man is the seat of religion, the throne of God, the habitation of the Spirit of God. To man as the temple of the Holy Ghost the spirit is what the Holy of Holies was to the sanctuary, the shrine of Jehovah, the centre from which Religion diffuses its sacred influence throughout the whole of his personality. That which constitutes the chief, essential difference between man and the animal is not his intellect or his reason, but his religious nature, his instinctive tendency to worship. Instinct in the animal sometimes approaches so near to reason in man that philosophers find it difficult to fix the limitation or to define with exactness the border line. But the worshipping propensity in man puts a broad line of demarcation between him and the animal.

When man thinks of God, he thinks of him not simply as a Being higher than or superior to himself, but as a Being who stands related to us men, a Being with whom we have to do and who has certain claims upon us, fear or love, reverence or terror; and a Being who also has to do with us, who can punish or bless, frown or smile, favour or curse.

The idea of God in the mind of man is always associated with the sense of dependence and obligation. One distinctive element in all the religions of mankind is the consciousness of sin. Angels are religious for they worship, but theirs is the religion

of innocence. No religion of innocence has ever been set up among men. No devotees of any religious system have ever worshipped their gods because of their love of holiness. Men everywhere are conscious of wrong-doing, of having angered their gods by neglect and disobedience. Their religion is one of tormenting fear. They see the frown furrowing the brow, the bolt trembling in the hand of their god and shudder as they approach. Hence their altars, their sacrifices, their blood-shedding, their long and painful pilgrimages and their self-inflicted torture:—these are only their religious methods for putting themselves right with their own consciences and with their gods. No religion can be satisfactory that does not establish intimate and peaceful relations between man and God. All the systems of false religion the world has ever known, from the refined philosophy of Greece to the base Fetishism of the savage, are only so many efforts of the human mind to establish a right relationship between offending man and offended God.

"Conscience in man declares that every sin is an injury done to God, to the moral universe and to ourselves, and that God ought not to forgive us without some reparation made for the wrong done to God to the universe and to ourselves." From every altar where sin is confessed or where sacrifice is

offered the cry rises shrill and solemn—"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the Most High God?" Notwithstanding the anxiety and sincerity with which many devout heathen put such questions, their gods are deaf to their cry and give no satisfactory answer. Thank God! The gospel of Christ gives the answer,—"God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." We have it also in the exquisite lines of Wesley—

> Thy Son thou hast given the world to redeem
> And bring us to heaven whose trust is in Him.

Religion is not a mere sentiment but a necessity of our nature. Worship is not a superstition but a law of our spiritual being.

III. IMMORTALITY is another great truth intuitively suggested by the spirit of man. All men everywhere have the inward consciousness of at least the possibility and probability, if not of the absolute certainty, of a future life. All religious systems are permeated with the idea of conscious personal existence after death. The hope of a happy future and the dread of a suffering future lie at the very basis of all religions. Men may differ and do differ

in their opinions concerning the nature, the conditions of the life hereafter, but the abstract idea is extinct in none.

In Ecclesiastes iii. 11 we read that God "hath set the world in the heart" of the sons of men. Commentators are generally agreed that the term "world" in this passage should be rendered eternity. The word in the original occurs six times in the Book of Ecclesiastes, and in every case it is so translated as to signify eternity or everlastingness, or long duration or for ever. Why that same word should be translated "world" in this particular passage we cannot tell. In our new version the revisers have put "eternity" in the margin as an alternative reading. The American revisers however have introduced the word "eternity" into the text. In the American Bible we read,—God "hath set eternity in their hearts"—in the heart of the sons of men. God hath set it there, planted it, rooted it deep in the spiritual consciousness of the sons of men. This accounts for the difficulty which men always have in settling down with satisfaction in the sceptical creed that 'death ends all.' When the young man gives himself up to a life of profligacy and pleasure he strives to cast the doctrine of immortality from his thought and from his creed that he may pursue his evil course unrestrained by the fear of retribution; but he finds it a hard if not

an impossible task. When brought into imminent peril or menaced with instant death he shrinks with terror from crossing the bar, and finds that his sceptical creed has not struck its root very deep into his moral nature, and that God has set eternity in his heart far deeper than he supposed.

Suppose an infant yet unborn had the power of reasoning, would he not say? It is evident that I have powers which fit me for another condition of being. I have eyes to behold the light, I have ears to hear sounds, I have hands to work and feet to walk, there must be some other life for me in the future where I shall have scope for the exercise of these wonderful and varied powers. So with man in the present life. This world does not afford sufficient scope for the exercise of all his activities. He is straitened, caged, under limitations, and in the ardour of his spirit he sometimes becomes impatient with these limitations and cries,—'Oh! that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.'

The eagle, noble bird majestic on the wing, is pierced through by the arrow and brought down to earth, there in its wounds and blood it strives and struggles to spread its wings and again to soar to its native heights but cannot. So man once noble, dwelling on high in purer regions, has been sorely wounded by the archers and reduced to the dust;

but the great spirit within yearns and struggles hard to rise into those eternal regions whence it came and for which it is destined. If you will bend your ear and listen to the voices of the great spirit within, you will hear its testimony—"I am weary of nothing on earth but clipped wings, pent-up powers, and the constant flutter of a soul that cannot expand at full length her pinions, much less fly."

The spirit in man is ever reaching forth its hand as if groping to find something commensurate with its wants and lasting as itself. Man aims at wealth and succeeds in accumulating the full amount he fixed upon at the outset, but when in actual possession he is not satisfied; he is haunted with the fear that he may outlive his millions, or that he may be removed to a district in the universe where gold will be of no avail. He aims at pleasure and succeeds in drawing freely from the manifold sources opened out by the world and society, but of that he soon wearies and finds it brings no permanent satisfaction. Memory and hope are the principal sources of human pleasure. To the animal the past is a blank and the future is not; the present is everything. Man draws happiness chiefly from the past and the future. He has power over the past; he can recall it and turn to good all its experience, its errors and sufferings, its disappointments and failures as well as its successes and triumphs. He

has power also over the future and is constantly bringing it to bear as a motive-power on the activities of the present. He toils hard in the cultivation of the soil and sowing the seed because he sees the golden harvest of the future waving in the summer sun.

The ancient Romans were accustomed to hold up the newborn babe with its face towards heaven as a solemn ceremonial. It may seem to us childish and superstitious, but to the Roman it was a sacred, significant symbol of the immortality of the infant. It was expressive of the desire that the first look of the child should be to eternity. Rightly interpreted it was a prayer that the gods would send as the first thought upon that child that it has connection with two worlds, the endless future as well as the fleeting present.

I can conceive of a man living a mere sensual, animal life and so degrade his higher, nobler nature as to feel no shrinking from annihilation. When the body ceases to have power of enjoyment he sees nothing worth living for and would naturally prefer extinction to a life of endless suffering. But take the good man who has seriously thought of the greatness of his nature and of its boundless possibilities, he recoils with horror from the idea of annihilation. He has reason, conscience, moral will; tell him that these are to be extinguished for ever

and you make him shudder. He is in conscious possession of truth, righteousness, love of God and goodness; tell him that all these divine things are to be blotted out for ever and you pierce him through with anguish. He has a soul capable of eternal progress in knowledge and blessedness; tell him that his hopes are a delusion, that his soul will be suddenly cut off at death and be extinguished for ever. Shocked at your impiety in agony of soul he cries,—"If a man die shall he live again? Is there for me no more personal immortality than for a consumed candle?" A voice from heaven replies,—"The dust shall return to the earth as it was; but the spirit shall return to God who gave it." The more a man is true to his better nature and to his God, the more he clings to existence and the more he shrinks from extinction as an infinite loss.

Dr. Cook the celebrated American Boston Lecturer tells us that a few years since one of the most notorious infidels in America died, and his friends telegraphing the fact throughout the country announced the date of the funeral and the kind of service that would be held, and one significant announcement was, that 'There will be no singing.' Infidelity has no song over its dead heroes. It cannot sing because it has nothing to sing about. We Christians have our victorious anthems which we can

sing in the very presence of death, and which we do sing over our saintly dead.

Job supplies us with one:—"I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand by the dust to the last; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my veins be consumed within me."

Paul gives us another:—"We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Peter supplies a third:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

John gives a fourth:—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Jesus Christ, the infallible Teacher, the Sovereign Revealer, has given us another:—"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if

it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

IV. RESPONSIBILITY is another great truth intuitively suggested by the spirit of man.

Man everywhere feels that he is not simply a piece of mechanism, or the victim of chance, or the creature of blind force, without will or choice. He can never get rid of the conscious 'I,'—his individuality, his personality, the sense that he is himself and not somebody else. He knows, he feels, he is conscious that his acts are his own; his thoughts, his purposes, his motives, his words are his own. He says, I think, I speak, I purpose, I act, I will or I will not; his very instinct prompts him to adopt this phraseology.

Let us once more look back for a moment at man's creation when God breathed Himself into the well-fashioned clay. When man first became conscious of his own personality and looked upon the animals, the birds, the insects around him, Would he not feel that he differed essentially from them all, that he was superior to them, that he possessed higher, nobler powers than they, for he was their lord; God having put these creatures in subjection to him?

Surely he would be conscious of this lordship into which he was created. When again there were given him a prohibition on the one hand and a permission on the other hand; when commanded not to eat of the tree of knowledge, and permitted to eat of the fruit of all the other trees in the garden, Would there not come upon him the solemn sense of responsibility, that he could think and choose for himself? He had freedom, but under limitation. He was under law and he was conscious that he could obey or disobey. He chose to disobey. When he willed to disobey he meanly strove (like his children still) to transfer the guilt of his disobedience to another, but conscience would not accept the excuse; it rather pursued him to his hiding-place and extorted from him the confession in the face of Heaven, "I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid and went and hid myself." Why hide? Why afraid if not guilty? It was the perverted heart that invented the excuse, while the conscience thundered:—"Guilty I stand before thy face, therefore I sought a hiding-place from thy dreaded presence."

Man commits evil freely by his own determination of will. If you did evil by constraint, by force, you might then accuse God as the author of evil insomuch as He created you and placed you under the law of force or fate; but your moral consciousness testifies

that the evil is your own act; that you could resist, that you could avoid but that you did not. Conscience with a voice more or less distinct always pronounces of the merit or demerit of your moral actions, and this always implies responsibility. Merit and demerit can only be qualities of a voluntary action and of a free being.

Conscience everywhere forebodes punishment and anticipates reward, and this again implies responsibility. The heathen have the work of the law written on their hearts, their conscience accusing or else excusing. When the bird sings it is not conscious of giving pleasure to others, nor does it sing because it gives others pleasure. Blind instinct prompts the bird to sing, but when the moral instinct prompted the heathen to do the things in the law, they were conscious that they were doing that which was morally right. Nero is said to have heard groans rising from the grave of his mother whom he had cruelly put to death. Hume had qualms of conscience occasionally when thinking of his past and future; but in a somewhat flippant, sarcastic tone he attempted to explain them away by saying that his nature received a shock by the religious ideas lodged in his mind when young. But Nero had not been Scripturally instructed and yet he feared the action of the furies behind the veil.[1]

[1] Cook. Boston Lectures.

In directing attention to these eternal verities you will have observed that I have not made extensive use of Holy Scripture to establish or confirm them. My aim has been chiefly to show that you have a revelation within, that the still small voice of your spiritual nature suggests and asserts these great fundamental truths, and that your moral consciousness is responsive to them and demands them. "What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man that is in him?" (1 Cor. ii. 11). These great truths are emphatically the things of a man, they belong not to the animal, but they belong to every man. In this high sense it may be said that 'God fashioneth our hearts alike.' "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. xxvii. 19).

Your spiritual nature has been made on a plan, it is your highest wisdom to study that plan, to search it out and understand it, then absolutely submit to it. The plan in the order of your threefold nature is this:—the spirit is to be supreme; the intellectual comes next; the body or the material is the last and lowest in the scale. This is the original, the ordained order of your Creator and Sovereign Lord. Sin has reversed this order. In some men the body is highest, the carnal rules, the animal is in the ascendency. The reason and the spirit are in subjection to the flesh. What shall we eat, what

shall we drink, wherewith shall we be clothed? The gratification of the physical nature with its many wants and passions is the supreme object of life. To be thus carnally minded is death. Others again claim for the intellect the supremacy, and call themselves rationalists. They profess to accept as true only what the mind can understand or apprehend, and to do as duty what reason commends. Ignoring the supernatural and the spiritual, they deify Reason and submit themselves to its dictations. In either case, whether the body or the intellect rules, it is a reversal of God's plan. His plan is—"Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33). Christianity proposes to restore you to God's original order and to make your spiritual nature supreme, sovereign lord of both mind and body, by bringing every thought of the intellect and every passion of the body into captivity to the supernatural and divine. You are made for God, for Religion, and for a blessed Immortality, and you alone are responsible for carrying out the high purposes for which God gave you a spiritual nature. If through neglect or disobedience you fail to keep and honour the law of your spiritual being, if you put the divine and spiritual in subjection to the animal, the penalty will fall on you and you alone, and you will find to your sorrow that there will be

friction in your life, and that "to be carnally minded is death." But if you fulfil your mission as a being possessed of spirit made for God, for Worship, and for Immortality, the reward will be yours, there will be ease and joy in every movement of life, and you will be able to testify from personal experience that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

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